Sri Sri Guru-Gaurangau Jayatah

BHAKTI-TATTVA-VIVEKA

Deliberation on the True Nature of Devotion

Composed by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

Translated from the Hindi edition of Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

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Preface

The unlimited glories of bhagavad-bhakti are visible in the Puranas, srutis, smrtis, Mahabharata, and Ramayana, as well as in the literatures of famous Vaisnava acaryas. By understanding the svarupa or constitutional nature of suddha-bhakti or unalloyed devotion and genuinely engaging in its practice, one can easily cross the ocean of nescience and achieve life's ultimate goal of krsna-prema. What to speak of the genuine practice of suddha-bhakti, even the attainment of a slight semblance of bhakti can award the fourfold boons of artha (economic development), dharma (religiosity), kama (sense gratification) and moksa (liberation). Therefore, people in general become attracted towards the cultivation of bhakti. But due to being ignorant of the true nature of suddha-bhakti, they usually come in contact with pretentious devotees who desire only wealth, women and fame, and under their influence either practice false devotion

or adopt devotional sentiments which are against the principles of pure devotion, all the while imagining them to be pure bhakti. Coming under the influence of those desiring impersonal liberation, they practice a shadow or reflection of real bhakti and deceive themselves. Thus they do not achieve the real fruit of bhakti.

Hence, the most merciful bhakti-rasacarya Srila Rupa Gosvami has explained in his book Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu the true nature of suddha-bhakti on the basis of scriptural evidences. Moreover, he has described the nature of chala-bhakti (pretentious devotion), abhasa-bhakti (a semblance of devotion), pratibimba-bhakti (a reflection of devotion), karma-misra-bhakti (devotion mixed with fruitive action), jnana-misra-bhakti (devotion mixed with impersonal knowledge), aropa-siddha-bhakti (endeavours which are indirectly attributed with the quality of devotion), sanga-siddha-bhakti (endeavours associated with or favourable to the cultivation of devotion) and so on. In the realm of devotion the Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu is unanimously accepted as the most authoritative literature, but it was composed in the Sanskrit language. So for the benefit of people in general, in his Bhakti-tattva-viveka Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has presented the grave and deep conceptions of Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu in the Bengali language in a straightforward and easily understandable manner.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura is an intimate eternal associate of the saviour of the masses in the age of Kali, Sacinandana Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. After the associates of Sri Gaurahari such as the Six Gosvamis, Sri Krsnadasa Kaviraja, Sri Narottama Thakura and Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura left this world and entered the unmanifest pastimes, the one-hundred years that followed are con-sidered a dark period for the Gaudiya Vaisnava line. This is because during this period in the Gaudiya line no powerful acarya appeared who could carry forward the teachings of Sriman Mahaprabhu in their pure form as was done previously. As a result, in a short span of time, on the pretext of following and preaching the prema-dharma taught by Sriman Mahaprabhu many false sects like Aul, Baul, Karta-bhaja, Neda-nedi, Sai, Sahajiya, Sakhi-bhekhi, Smarta and Jati-gosai appeared and, while engaged in abundant misbehaviour, started preaching their own imaginary and materially motivated deceitful principles. They defamed Gaudiya Vaisnavism to such an extent that educated and respectable people started viewing it with abhorrence. Gradually the Gaudiya conception of devotion began disappearing.

At this time, in the year 1838, Srila Saccidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakura auspiciously appeared in a well-educated and cultured family in the village of

Vira-nagara which is near Sri Navadvipa- dhama in West Bengal. By compiling approximately one-hundred authoritative books on the science of bhakti in Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, English and various other languages, he ushered in a new era in the Gaudiya Vaisnava line and re-established its lost glory. For this great effort, the Gaudiya Vaisnavas will remain eternally indebted to him. In the modern age, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura set in motion once again the bhakti-bhagirathi, or flowing river of pure devotion, and for this he is well-known as the Seventh Gosvami.

This Bhakti-tattva-viveka is a collection of four essays he composed originally in Bengali on the deliberation of devotional principles. The first Hindi edition of this material was serialised in issues from the fourth and fifth years (1958-59) of Sri Bhagavat Patrika, a spiritual magazine in Hindi published monthly from Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha in Mathura. On the request of our faithful readers and by the inspiration of the present day acarya of the Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Vamana Maharaja, it was presented in book form in 1990.

This present English edition is a direct translation of the Hindi edition. Sriman Prema-vilasa dasa Adhikari provided the English rendering as well as the layout and design. He also oversaw all aspects of the book’s publication. Sriman Navadvipa dasa Adhikari served as Sanskrit editor and offered many valuable suggestions which enhanced the clarity of the presentation. Finally, the book was proofread by Srimati Yasoda-gopi dasi. I pray that the mercy of Sri Sri Guru-Gauranga and Sri Sri Radha Vinoda-bihari be upon all these devotees for their sincere efforts.

By the causeless mercy of the founder of the Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti and its subordinate Gaudiya Matha branches throughout India, the most worshipable acarya-kesari jagad-guru om visnupada astottara-sata Sri Srimad Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, Gaudiya devotional literatures are being published by the Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti. On the most auspicious occasion of his appearance day, this edition is being presented as an offering placed into his lotus hands. Being the great embodiment of affection and forgiveness, may he transmit the potency of his mercy into the core of our hearts so that we can render maximum service to his innermost desire. This is our humble prayer at his lotus feet.

Lastly, I humbly request the faithful readers to deliberate upon this literature

with great concentration. By understanding the true nature of suddha-bhakti, one can relish the ultimate goal of all scriptures, the pure nectar of krsna-prema as exhibited and preached by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

An aspirant for a particle of mercy of Sri Guru and the Vaisnavas,

Tridandi-bhiksu Sri Bhaktivedanta Narayana

Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha, Mathura February 24, 1997

Srila Bhaktivinoda-vandana

namo bhaktivinodaya saccidananda-namine gaura-sakti-svarupaya rupanuga-varaya te

I offer pranama unto Saccidananda Sri Bhaktivinoda who is the foremost of rupanuga devotees and the embodiment of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's sakti.

Sri Srimad Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja

namah om visnupadaya acarya-simha-rupine sri-srimad-bhakti prajnana kesava iti namine (1) atimartya-caritraya sva-sritananca-paline jiva-duhkhe sadarttaya sri-nama-prema-dayine (2)

I offer pranama to the lion-like acarya, jagad-guru om visnupada astottara-sata Sri Srimad Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami, who is a thoroughly transcendental personality, who nurtures with great affection those who have taken shelter of him, who is always sad to see the sufferings of souls who are inimical to Krsna, and who bestows love for the holy name.

Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

tridandinam bhakta-siromanim ca

sri-krsna-padabja dhrtaika-hrdi

caitanya-lilamrta-sara saram

narayanam tvam satatam prapadye

I offer repeated pranama unto Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja who is the crown- jewel of devotees among tridandi-sannyasis, and who always keeps in his heart the lotus feet of Sri (Srimati Radhika) and Krsna. He especially keeps in his heart the very essence of the nectarine truths for which Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu enacted His pastimes.

Chapter 1 The Intrinsic Nature of Devotion

yugapad rajate yasmin bhedabheda vicitrata

vande tam krsna-caitanyam panca-tattvanvitam svatah (1)

pranamya gauracandrasya sevakan, suddha-vaisnavan

'bhakti-tattva viveka' khyam sastram vaksyami yatnatah (2)

visva-vaisnava dasasya ksudrasyakincanasya me

etasminn udyame hy ekam balam bhagavati ksama (3)

"I offer pranama unto Sri Krsna Caitanya who is naturally manifest with the panca-tattva and in whom the contrasting qualities of unity (abheda) and distinction (bheda) simultaneously exist. After offering pranama unto the servants of Sri Gauracandra, who are all pure Vaisnavas, I undertake with utmost care the writing of this book known as Bhakti-tattva-viveka. Being an insignificant and destitute servant of all the Vaisnavas in the world (visva-vaisnava dasa), in this endeavour of mine I appeal for their divine forgiveness, for that is my only strength."

Most respectable Vaisnavas! Our sole objective is to relish and propagate the nectar of sud- dha-bhakti unto Lord Hari. Therefore, our foremost duty is to understand the true nature of suddha-bhakti. This understanding will benefit us in two ways. First, knowing the true nature of suddha-bhakti will dispel our ignorance concerning the topic of bhakti and thus make our human life successful by allowing us to relish the nectar derived from engaging in suddha-bhakti in its pure form. Secondly, it will enable us to protect ourselves from the polluted and mixed conceptions which currently exist in the name of suddha-bhakti.

Unfortunately, in present day society in the name of suddha-bhakti various types of mixed devotion such as karma-misra (mixed with fruitive action), jnana-misra (mixed with speculative knowledge) and yoga-misra (mixed with various types

of yoga processes) as well as various polluted and imaginary conceptions are spreading everywhere like germs of plague. People in general consider these polluted and mixed conceptions to be bhakti, respect them as such, and thus remain deprived of suddha-bhakti. These polluted and mixed concepts are our greatest enemies. Some people say that there is no value in bhakti, that God is an imaginary sentiment only, that man has merely created the image of a God in his imagination, and that bhakti is just a diseased state of consciousness which cannot benefit us in any way. These types of people, though opposed to bhakti, cannot do much harm to us because we can easily recognise them and avoid them. But those who propagate that bhagavad-bhakti is the highest dharma yet behave against the principles of suddha-bhakti and also instruct others against the principles of suddha-bhakti can be especially harmful to us. In the name of bhakti they instruct us against the actual principles of bhakti and ultimately lead us onto a path which is totally opposed to bhagavad-bhakti. Therefore, with great endeavour our previous acaryas have defined the svarupa or intrinsic nature of bhakti and have repeatedly cautioned us to keep ourselves away from polluted and mixed concepts. We shall deliberate on their instructions in sequence. They have compiled numerous literatures to establish the svarupa of bhakti, and amongst them Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu is the most beneficial. In defining the general characteristics of suddha-bhakti, Srila Rupa Gosvami has written there (verse 1.1.11):

anyabhilasita-sunyam jnana-karmady anavrtam

anukulyena krsnanusilanam bhaktir uttama

“The cultivation of activities which are meant exclusively for the pleasure of Sri Krsna, or in other words the uninterrupted flow of service to Sri Krsna, performed through all endeavours of the body, mind, and speech, and through the expression of various spiritual sentiments (bhavas), which is not covered by jnana (knowledge aimed at impersonal liberation) and karma (reward-seeking activity), and which is devoid of all desires other than the aspiration to bring happiness to Sri Krsna, is called uttama-bhakti, pure devotional service.”

In the above verse, each and every word has to be analysed; otherwise we cannot understand the attributes of bhakti. In this verse, what is the meaning of the words ‘uttama-bhakti’? Does the phrase uttama-bhakti or topmost devotion also imply the existence of adhama or inferior bhakti? Or can it mean something else? Uttama-bhakti means the stage where the devotional creeper is in its

completely pure or uncontaminated form. For example, uncontaminated water means pure water, meaning that in this water there is no colour, smell or adulteration of any kind caused by the addition of another substance. Similarly, the phrase uttama-bhakti refers to bhakti which is devoid of any contamination, adulteration or attachment to material possessions and which is performed in an exclusive manner. The usage of these qualifying adjectives here teaches us that we should not accept any sentiments which are opposed to bhakti. The negation of sentiments which are opposed to bhakti inevitably directs us towards the pure nature of bhakti itself. Perhaps by merely using the word bhakti alone this meaning is indicated, since the word bhakti already contains within it all these adjectives anyway. Then has bhakti-rasacarya Srila Rupa Gosvami specifically employed the qualifying adjective uttama (topmost) for no reason? No—just as when desiring to drink water people generally ask, "Is this water uncontaminated?" similarly, in order to describe the attributes of uttama-bhakti, our previous acaryas considered it necessary to indicate that people mostly practice misra-bhakti or mixed devotion. In reality, rasacarya Srila Rupa Gosvami is aiming to describe the attributes of kevala-bhakti or exclusive devotion. Chala-bhakti, pratibimba-bhakti, chaya-bhakti (a shadow of devotion), karma-misra-bhakti, jnana-misra-bhakti and so on are not suddha- bhakti. They will all be examined in sequence later on.

What are the svarupa-laksana or intrinsic attributes of bhakti? To answer this question it is said that bhakti is anukulyena krsnanusilana, the cultivation of activities which are meant exclusively for the pleasure of Sri Krsna. In his Durgama-sangamani commentary on Bhakti- rasamrta-sindhu, Srila Jiva Gosvami has explained that the word anusilanam has two meanings. First, it means cultivation through the endeavours to engage and disengage one's body, mind and words. Second, it means cultivation towards the object of our priti or affection through manasi-bhava, the sentiments of the heart and mind. Although anusilana is of two types, the cultivation through manasi-bhava is included within cultivation by cesta, one's activities. Hence, one's activities or endeavours (cesta) and one's internal sentiments (bhava) are mutually interdependent, and in the end it is the cesta which are concluded to be the sole characteristics of cultivation. Only when the activities of one's body, mind and words are favourably executed for the pleasure of Krsna is it called bhakti. Kamsa and Sisupala were always endeavouring towards Krsna with their whole body, mind and words but their endeavours will not be accepted as bhakti because such endeavours were unfavourable to krsna-priti or Krsna's pleasure. Unfavourable endeavours cannot be called bhakti. The word bhakti is derived from the root

verb form ‘bhaj’. It is said in the Garuda Purana (Purva-khanda 231.3):

bhaj ityesa vai dhatuh sevayam parikirtitah

tasmat seva budhaih prokta bhaktih sadhana-bhuyasi

“The verbal root bhaj means to render service. Therefore, thoughtful sadhakas should engage in the service of Sri Krsna with great endeavour, for it is only by such service that bhakti is born.”

According to this verse, krsna-seva or loving devotional service to Krsna is called bhakti. Such service is the intrinsic attribute of bhakti.

In the main verse the word krsnanusilanam has been used. The purport of this is that Svayam Bhagavan Sri Krsna is the sole ultimate objective indicated by the term kevala-bhakti (exclusive devotion). The word bhakti is also used for Narayana and various other expansions of Krsna, but the complete sentiments of bhakti which can be reciprocated with Krsna cannot be reciprocated with other forms. This point can be analysed in detail on another occasion when the topic is more suitable for it. For the time being it is necessary to understand that bhagavat- tattva is the only object of bhakti. Although the supreme absolute truth (para-tattva) is one, it is manifested in three forms, that is brahma-tattva, paramatma-tattva and bhagavat-tattva. Those who try to perceive the absolute truth through the cultivation of jnana cannot realise anything beyond brahma-tattva. Through such spiritual endeavour they try to cross material existence by negation of the qualities of the material world (neti-neti); thus they imagine brahma to be inconceivable, unmanifest, formless and immutable. But merely imagining the absence of material qualities does not grant one factual realisation of the absolute truth. Such spiritualists think that because the names, forms, qualities and activities in the material world are all temporary and painful, the brahma which exists beyond the contamination of matter cannot possess eternal names, forms, qualities, pastimes and so on. They argue on the basis of evidence from the srutis,which emphasise the absence of material attributes in the Supreme, that the absolute truth is beyond the purview of mind and words, and that it has no ears, bodily parts, limbs and so on. These arguments have some place, but they can be settled by analysing the statement of Advaita Acarya found in the Sn Caitanya-candrodaya-natakam (6.67) written by Kavi Karnapura:

ya ya srutir jalpati nirvisesam sa savidhatte savisesam eva vicanayoge sati hanta tasam pnayo baliyah savisesam eva

In whatever statements from the srutis where the impersonal tattva is indicated, in the very same statements personal tattva is also mentioned. By carefully analysing all the statements from the snutis as a whole, we can see that the personal tattva is emphasised more. For example, one sruti says that the absolute truth has no hands, no legs and no eyes, but we understand that He does everything, travels everywhere and hears everything. The pure understanding of this statement is that He doesn’t have material hands, legs, limbs and so on as conditioned souls do. His form is transcendental, meaning that it is beyond the twenty-four elements of material nature and purely spiritual.

By the cultivation of jnana it will appear that impersonal bnahma is the supreme tattva. Here the subtlety is that jnana itself is material, meaning in the material world whatever knowledge we acquire or whatever principle (siddhanta) we establish is done by depending solely upon material attributes. Therefore, either that principle is material or by applying the process of negation of the material (vyatineka) we conceive of a principle which is the opposite of gross matter, but by this method one cannot achieve the factual supreme tattva. In his Bhakti-sandarbha, Srila Jiva Gosvami has outlined the tattva which is attained by those who pursue the path of impersonal jnana as follows:

prathamatah srotrnam hi vivekastavan eva, yavata jadatiriktam cinmatram vastupasthitam bha- vati. tasmi—s cinmatne ’pi vastuni ye visesah svarupa-bhuta-sakti-siddhah bhagavattadinupa vanttante tams te vivektum na ksamante. yatha rajani-khandini jyotisi jyotin matnatve ’pi ye mandalantan bahis ca divva-vimanadi-panaspana-prthag-bhutanasmi-panamanunupa visesas tams carma-caksus na ksamanta ity anvayah tad vat. purvavac ca yadi mahat-krpa-visesena divya drstita bhavati tada visesopalabdhis ca bhavet na ca nirvisesa cinmatra-brahmanubhave- na tal lina eva bhavati. (214)

idam eva (Gita 8.3) “svabhavo ’dhyatmam ucyate” ity anena sri-gitas uktam. svasya sud- dhasyatmano bhavo bhavana atmany adhikrtya vartamanatvad adhyatma-sabdenocyate ity arthah. (216)

“In the beginning the students who are pursuing the path of jnana require sufficient discrimination to comprehend the existence of a transcendent entity (cinmaya-vastu) which is beyond the contamination of gross matter. Although

the specific attributes of Godhead established by the potencies inherent within the Lord's very nature are intrinsicly present within that transcendent entity, the adherents of the path of jnana are unable to perceive them. For exam-ple, the sun is a luminary which dispels the darkness of night. Although its luminous quality is easily understood, the inner and outer workings of the sun planet, the difference which exists between individual particles of light, and the specific distinguishing features of the innumerable atomic particles of light are all imperceptible to human eyes. Similarly, those who view the transcendent entity through the eyes of impersonal jnana are unable to perceive the Lord's divine personal attributes. If, as previously described, one acquires transcendental vision by the special mercy of great devotees, one will be able to directly recognise the Lord's personal attributes. Otherwise, by realisation of the impersonal existential brahma, one will attain only the state of merging into that brahma." (Anuccheda 214)

"This knowledge is stated in the Bhagavad-gita (8.3): svabhavo 'dhyatman ucyate—'The inherent nature of the living entity is known as the self.' The meanings of the words svabhava and adhyatma are as follows. Sva refers to the suddha-atma or pure self, and the word bhava refers to ascertainment. Consequently the ascertainment of the pure living entity as a unique individual, eternally related to the Supreme, is known as sva-bhava. When the atma or self is made the principal subject of focus and thus given the power to act in its proper function, it is known as adhyatma." (Anuccheda 216)

The purport of this is that when spiritual knowledge is acquired through the process of negation (neti-neti), the absolute truth, which is transcendental to maya, is realised only partially. The variegated aspect of transcendence which lies much deeper within is not realised. If one who follows this process meets a personalist, self-realised Vaisnava guru, then only can he be protected from the anartha of impersonalism.

Those who pursue the path of yoga in the end arrive only at realisation of the all-pervading paramatma-tattva. They cannot attain realisation of suddha-bhagavat-tattva. Paramatma, Isvara, personal Visnu and so on are the objects of research in the yoga process. In this process we can find a few attributes of bhakti, but it is not suddha-bhakti. Generally religious principles in this world which pass for bhagavat-dharma are all merely yoga processes which strive for realisation of the paramatma feature. We cannot expect that in the end all of them will ultimately lead us to bhagavat-dharma, because in the process of meditation

there are numerous obstacles before one finally realises the absolute truth. Besides, when after practicing either yoga or meditation for some time one imagines that “I am brahma” (ahangrahopasana), there is the maximum possibility of falling into the trap of impersonal spiritual jnana.

In this process, realisation of the eternal form of Bhagavan and the variegated characteristics of transcendence is not available. The form which is imagined at the time of upasana or med- itational worship—whether it be the virat (the gigantic form of the Lord conceived in the shape of the universe) or the four-armed form situated within the heart—is not eternal. This process is called paramatma-darsana or realisation of the Supersoul. Although this process is superior to the cultivation of impersonal jnana, it is not the perfect and all-pleasing process. Astanga- yoga, hatha-yoga, karma-yoga and all other yoga practices are included within this process. Although raja-yoga or adhyatma-yoga follows this process to a certain extent, in most cases it is merely included within the process of jnana. The siddhanta or philosophical conclusion is that paramatma-darsana cannot be called suddha-bhakti. In this regard it is said in Bhakti-san- darbha, “antaryamitvamaya-maya-sakti-pracura-cic chaktyasa visistam paramatmeti”: after the creation of this universe, the expansion of the Supreme Lord who enters it as the controller of material nature and who is situated as the maintainer of the creation is known as Jagadisvara or the all-pervading Paramatma. His function is related more to displaying the external potency rather than the internal potency. Therefore, this tattva is naturally inferior to the supreme and eternal bhagavat-tattva.

Absolute truth realised exclusively through the process of bhakti is called Bhagavan. In Bhakti-sandarbha the characteristics of bhagavat-tattva are described as “pari-purna-sarva- sakti-visista-bhagavan iti ”: the complete absolute truth endowed with all transcendental potencies is called Bhagavan. After the creation of the universe, Bhagavan enters it through His partial expansion as the Paramatma: as Garbhodakasayi, He is situated as the Supersoul of the complete universe (virat-antaryami) and as Ksirodakasayi, He is situated as the Supersoul in the hearts of the living entities. Again, in direct distinction from the manifested material worlds, Bhagavan appears as the impersonal brahma-svarupa-tattva. Hence, Bhagavan is the original tattva and is the supreme absolute truth. His svarupa-vigraha or intrinsic form is transcendental. The complete spiritual bliss resides in Him. His potencies are inconceivable and beyond any reasoning. He cannot be fathomed by any process fabricated by the knowledge of the infinitesimal jiva. By the influence of His inconceivable

potency, the entire universe and all the living entities residing within it have manifested. Jivas manifesting from the tatastha-sakti or marginal potency of Bhagavan become successful only by following the dharma of engaging exclusively in His loving transcendental service. Then by the practice of nama-bhajana one can realise through one's transcendental eyes the unparalleled beauty of Bhagavan. The processes of jnana and yoga are incapable of approaching Bhagavan. By combining bhagavat-tattva with jnana, the tattva appears as the formless and effulgent impersonal brahma, and if He is seen through the yoga process, He appears as Paramatma invested within this material creation. Bhakti is supremely pure. It is very painful for Bhakti-devi, the personification of bhakti, to see the Supreme Personality in His lesser manifestations. If she sees this anywhere, she cannot tolerate it.

Out of these three manifestations of the absolute truth, it is only the manifestation of Bhagavan's personal form which is the object of bhakti. But even within Bhagavan's personal manifestation there is one important distinction. Where the internal potency (svarupa-sakti) displays its complete opulence (aisvarya), there Bhagavan appears as Vaikunthanatha Narayana, and where the internal potency displays its supreme sweetness (madhurya), there Bhagavan appears as Sri Krsna. In spite of being predominant almost everywhere, aisvarya loses its charm in the presence of madhurya. In the material world we cannot draw such a comparison; no such example is visible anywhere. In the material world aisvarya is more influential than madhurya, but in the spiritual world it is completely the opposite. There madhurya is superior and more influential than aisvarya. O my dear devotees! All of you just deliberate upon aisvarya one time, and then afterwards lovingly bring sentiments of madhurya into your hearts. By doing so you will be able to understand this truth. Just as in the material world when the sun rises and consumes the moonlight, similarly when a taste of the sweetness of madhurya appears in a devotee's heart, he no longer finds aisvarya to be tasteful. Srila Rupa Gosvami has written (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.59):

siddhantatas tv abhede 'pi srisa-krsna svarupayoh

rasenotkrsyate krsna-rupam esa rasa-sthitih

Although from the viewpoint of siddhanta Narayana and Krsna are non-different, Krsna is superior due to possessing more rasa. Such is the glory of rasa-tattva. All of this tattva will be made clear later in this discussion. But for now it is

essential to understand that the favourable cultivation of activities meant to please Sri Krsna (anukulyena-anusilanam) is the sole intrinsic characteristic (svarupa-laksana) of bhakti. Thus this confirms the same statement made in the main verse.

To remain both devoid of desires separate from the desire to please Sri Krsna (anyabhilasita) and free from the coverings of j-ana and karma (j-ana-karmady anavrtam) is the tatastha- laksana or marginal characteristic of bhakti. “Visnu-bhakti pravaksyami yaya sarvam avapy- ate”—in this half verse from Bhakti-sandarbha the marginal characteristics of bhakti are reviewed. Its meaning is that by the practice of the aforementioned visnu-bhakti the jiva can attain everything. The desire to attain something is called abhilasita. From the word abhlilasita one should not derive the meaning that the desire to progress in bhakti and to ultimately reach its perfectional stage is also to be rejected. “Through my practice of sadhana-bhakti I will one day attain the stage of bhava”—it is highly commendable for a devotee to maintain such a desire, but apart from this desire all other types of desires are fit to be rejected. There are two types of separate desires: the desire for sense gratification (bhukti) and the desire for liberation (mukti). Srila Rupa Gosvami says (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.22):

bhukti-mukti-sprha yavat pisaci hrdi varttate

tavat bhakti-sukhasyatra katham abhyudayo bhavet

As long as the two witches of the desires for bhukti and mukti remain in a devotee’s heart, not even a fraction of the pure happiness derived from svarupa-siddha-bhakti will arise. Both bodily and mental enjoyment are considered bhukti. To make an extraneous effort to remain free from disease, to desire palatable foodstuffs, strength and power, wealth, followers, wife, sons and daughters, fame and victory are all considered bhukti. To desire to take one’s next birth in a brahmana family or in a royal family, to attain residence in the heavenly planets or in Brahmaloka or to obtain any other type of happiness in one’s next life is also considered bhukti. Practice of the eightfold yoga system and to desire the eight or eighteen varieties of mystic perfections are also categorised as bhukti. The greed for bhukti forces the jiva to become subordinate to the six enemies headed by lust and anger. Envy easily takes over the heart of the jiva and rules it. Hence, to attain suddha-bhakti one has to remain completely aloof from the desire for bhukti. To abandon the desire for bhukti, a conditioned soul need not reject the objects of the senses by going to reside in the forest.

Merely going to reside in the forest or accepting the dress of a sannyasi will not free one from the desire for bhukti. If bhakti resides in a devotee's heart, then even while living amidst the objects of the senses he will be able to remain detached from them and will be capable of abandoning the desire for bhukti. Therefore, Srila Rupa Gosvami says (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.254-256):

rucim udvahatas tatra janasya bhajane hareh

visayesu garistho 'pi ragah prayo viliyate

anasaktasya visayan yatharham upayunjatah

nirbandhah krsna-sambandhe yuktam vairagyam ucyate

prapancikataya buddhya hari sambandhi vastunah

mumuksubhih parityago vairagyam phalgu kathyate

When the jiva develops a taste for krsna-bhajana, at that time his excessive attachment for the objects of the senses starts gradually fading. Then with a spirit of detachment he accepts the objects of the senses only according to his needs, knowing those objects to be related to Krsna and behaving accordingly. This is called yukta-vairagya. The renunciation of those who, desiring liberation from matter, reject the objects of the senses considering them to be illusory is called phalgu or useless. It is not possible for an embodied jiva to completely renounce the objects of the senses, but changing the enjoying tendency towards them while maintaining an understanding of their relation to Krsna cannot be called sense-gratification. Rupa (form), rasa (taste), gandha (smell), sparsa (touch) and sabda (sound) are the objects of the senses. We should try to perceive the world in such a way that everything appears related to Krsna, meaning that we should see all jivas as servants and maidservants of Krsna. See gardens and rivers as pleasurable sporting places for Krsna. See that all types of eatables are to be used as an offering for His pleasure. In all types of aromas, perceive the aroma of krsna-prasada. In the same way, see that all types of flavours are to be relished by Krsna, see that all the elements we touch are related to Krsna, and hear only hari-katha or narrations describing the activities of His great devotees. When a devotee develops such an outlook, then he will no longer see the objects of the senses as being separate from Bhagavan Himself. The tendency to enjoy the happiness obtained from sense gratification intensifies the desire for bhukti within the heart of a devotee and ultimately deviates him from the path of bhakti.

On the other hand, by accepting all the objects of this world as instruments to be employed in Krsna’s service, the desire for bhukti is completely eradicated from the heart, thus allowing suddha-bhakti to manifest there.

As it is imperative to abandon the desire for bhukti, it is equally important to abandon the desire for mukti. There are some very deep principles and conceptions regarding mukti. Five types of mukti are mentioned in the scriptures:

salokya-sarsti-samipya-sarupyaikatvam apy uta diyamanam na grhnanti vina mat-sevanam janah

Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.29.13

Sri Kapiladeva said, “O my dear Mother! Despite being offered the five types of liberation known as salokya, sarsti, sarupya, samipya and ekatva, my pure devotees don’t accept them. They only accept my transcendental loving service.”

Through salokya-mukti one attains residence in the abode of Bhagavan. To obtain opulence equal to that of Bhagavan is called sarsti-mukti. To attain a position in proximity to Bhagavan is called samipya-mukti. To obtain a four-armed form like that of Bhagavan Visnu is called sarupya-mukti. To attain sayujya-mukti (merging) is called ekatva. This sayujya-mukti is of two kinds: brahma-sayujya and isvara-sayujya. The cultivation of brahma-jnana or impersonal knowledge leads one to brahma-sayujya. Also by following the method prescribed in the spiritual scriptures one attains brahma-sayujya. By properly observing the Patanjali yoga system, one attains the liberation known as isvara-sayujya or merging into the Lord’s form. For devotees both types of sayujya-mukti are worthy of rejection. Those who desire to attain sayujya as the perfectional stage may also follow the process of bhakti, but their bhakti is temporary and fraudulent. They don’t accept bhakti as an eternal occupation and merely consider it to be a means to attain brahma. Their conception is that after attaining brahma, bhakti does not exist. Therefore, the bhakti of a sincere devotee deteriorates in the association of such spiritualists. Suddha-bhakti never resides in the hearts of those who consider sayujya-mukti to be the ultimate perfection. Regarding the other muktis, Srila Rupa Gosvami explains (Bhakti-rasamrta- sindhu 1.2.55-57):

atra tyajyatayaivokta muktih panca-vidhapi cet salokyadis tathapy atra bhaktya

nati virudhyate

sukhaisvaryottara seyam prema-sevottarety api salokyadir-dvidha tatra nadya sevajusam mata

kintu premaika-madhurya-jusa ekantino harau naivangi kurvate jatu muktim panca-vidham api

Although the aforementioned five types of mukti are worthy of rejection by devotees, the four types of salokya, samipya, sarupya and sarsti are not completely adverse to bhakti. According to the difference in a particular devotee's eligibility to receive them, these four types of mukti assume two forms: sva-sukha-aisvarya pradanakari (that which bestows transcendental happiness and opulence) and prema-seva-pradanakari (that which bestows loving transcendental service unto Bhagavan). Those who reach the Vaikuntha planets through these four types of liberation obtain the fruit of transcendental happiness and opulence. Servitors or devotees of the Lord never accept such liberation under any circumstances, and the premi- bhaktas or loving devotees never accept any one of the five varieties of mukti. Therefore, within pure unalloyed devotees the desire for liberation does not exist. Thus to remain free from the desire for mukti is anyabhilasita-sunya, being devoid of any desire other than that to please Sri Krsna. This is one of the tatastha-laksana or marginal characteristics of bhakti.

To remain free from and uncovered by tendencies such as those for jnana and karma is another marginal characteristic of bhakti. In the phrase ' jnana-karmadi,' the word 'adi,' meaning 'and so forth,' refers to the practice of astanga-yoga, vairagya sankhya-yoga and the occu-pational duties corresponding to one's caste or creed. It has already been mentioned that the favourable cultivation of activities to please Sri Krsna is called bhakti. The living entity is transcendental, Krsna is transcendental, and the bhakti-vrtti or tendency of unalloyed devotion through which the living entity establishes an eternal relationship with Krsna is also transcendental. When the jiva is situated in his pure state, only then does the svarupa-laksana or intrinsic attribute of bhakti act. At that time there is no opportunity for the tatastha-laksana of bhakti to act. When the jiva is conditioned and situated in the material world, along with his svarupa or constitutional identity two more marginal identities are present: the gross and subtle bodies. Through the medium of these the living entity endeavours to fulfil his various desires while residing in the material world.

Therefore, when introducing someone to the conception of sud- dha-bhakti we have to acquaint him with the concept of anyabhilasita-sunya, being devoid of any desires other than the desire to please Sri Krsna. In the transcendental world this type of identification is not required. After becoming entangled in the ocean of material existence, the jiva becomes absorbed in various types of external activities and is thereby attacked by a disease called ‘forgetfulness of Krsna’. Within the jiva suffering from the severe miseries caused by this disease arises a desire to be delivered from the ocean of material nescience. At that time within his mind he condemns himself, thinking, “Alas! How unfortunate I am! Having fallen into this insurmountable ocean of material existence, I am being thrown here and there by the violent waves of my wicked desires. At different times I am being attacked by the crocodiles and other violent creatures of lust, anger and so forth. I cry helplessly at my miserable condition but I don’t see any hope for my survival. What should I do? Do I not have any well-wisher? Is there any possible way I can be rescued? Alas! What to do? How will I be delivered? I don’t see any solution to my dilemma. Alas! Alas! I am most unfortunate.” In such a distressed state of helplessness, the jiva becomes exhausted and falls silent.

Seeing the jiva in this condition, the most compassionate Sri Krsna then mercifully implants the bhakti-lata-bija or seed of the creeper of devotion within his heart. This seed is known as sraddha or faith and it contains within it the undeveloped manifestation of bhava or the first sprout of divine love for Bhagavan. Nourished by the water of the cultivation of devotional activities headed by hearing and chanting, that seedling first sprouts, then grows leaves, and then finally flowers as it assumes the full form of a creeper. When in the end good fortune dawns upon the jiva, the bhakti-lata bears the fruit of prema.

Now I will explain the gradual development of bhakti starting from its seed-form of sraddha. It is to be understood clearly that as soon as the seed of sraddha is sown in the heart, immediately Bhakti-devi appears there. Bhakti at the stage of sraddha is very delicate like a newborn baby girl. From the very time of her appearance in a devotee’s heart she has to be very carefully kept in a healthy condition. Just as a householder protects his very tender baby daughter from sun, cold, harmful creatures, hunger, and thirst, similarly the infant-like Sraddha-devi must be protected from all varieties of inauspiciousness. Otherwise the undesirable association of jnana, karma, yoga, attachment to material objects, dry renunciation and so forth will not allow her to gradually blossom into uttama-bhakti and will instead make her grow into a different form. In other

words, the sraddha will not eventually develop into bhakti but will merely assume the form of anarthas. The danger of disease remains up until the tender Sraddha-devi becomes free from the influence of anarthas and transforms into nistha from being nurtured by the affectionate mother of the association of genuine devotees and from taking the medicine of bhajana. Once she has reached the stage of nistha, no anartha whatsoever can easily harm her.

If Sraddha-devi is not properly nurtured with the utmost care, she will be polluted by the germs, termites, mosquitoes and unhealthy environment of the processes of jnana, renunciation, impersonal conceptions, sankhya and so forth. In the conditioned stage, jnana, vairagya and so on are unavoidable for the jiva, but if jnana is of a particular variety which is unfavourable to bhakti, it can ruin bhakti. Hence, according to Srila Jiva Gosvami the word 'jnana' here refers to the pursuit of impersonal brahma. Jnana is of two types: spiritual knowledge which is directed towards obtaining mukti, and bhagavat-tattva-jnana which arises simultaneously along with bhakti within the heart of the jiva. The first type of jnana is directly opposed to bhakti and it is essential to stay far away from it. Some people say that bhakti arises only after the cultivation of such spiritual knowledge, but this statement is completely erroneous. Bhakti actually dries up by the cultivation of such knowledge. On the other hand, the tattva-jnana concerning the mutual relationship (sambandha) between the isvara, the jiva and maya which arises within the heart of the jiva through the faithful cultivation of devotional activities is helpful for his bhakti. This knowledge is called ahaituka-jnana or knowledge which is devoid of ulterior motive. Suta Gosvami says in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.7):

vasudeve bhagavati bhakti-yogah prayojitah

janayatyasu vairagyam jnanam ca yad ahaitukam

“Bhakti-yoga which is performed for the satisfaction of Bhagavan Vasudeva brings about detachment from all things unrelated to Him and gives rise to pure knowledge which is free from any motive for liberation and which is directed exclusively toward the attainment of Him.”

Now, by carefully reviewing all the previous statements, we can understand that to remain uncovered by jnana, karma and so forth—which means accepting them as subservient entities—and engage in the favourable cultivation of activities meant to please Sri Krsna which are devoid of any other desire is called uttama-

bhakti. Bhakti is the only means by which the jiva can obtain transcendental bliss. Besides bhakti all other methods are external. With the assis-tance of bhakti, sometimes karma is identified as aropa-siddha-bhakti or endeavours which are indirectly attributed with the quality of devotion and sometimes jnana is identified as sanga- siddha-bhakti or endeavours associated with or favourable to the cultivation of devotion. But they can never be accepted as svarupa-siddha-bhakti or bhakti in its constitutionally perfected stage. Svarupa-siddha-bhakti is kaitava-sunya or free from any deceit and full of unalloyed bliss by nature, meaning that it is devoid of any desires for heavenly enjoyment and the attainment of liberation. But in aropa-siddha-bhakti the desires for bhukti and mukti remain in a hidden position. Therefore, it is also called sakaitava-bhakti or deceitful bhakti. Oh my dear intimate Vaisnavas! By your constitutional nature you are attracted to svarupa-siddha-bhakti and have no taste for aropa-siddha-bhakti or sanga-siddha-bhakti. Although these two types of devotion are not actually bhakti by their constitution, some people refer to these two types of activities as bhakti. In fact they are not bhakti, but bhakti-abhasa or the semblance of real bhakti. If by some good fortune through the practice of bhakti-abhasa one develops sraddha for the true nature of bhakti, then only can such practice transform into suddha-bhakti. But this doesn’t happen easily, because by the practice of bhakti-abhasa there exists every possibility of remaining bereft of suddha-bhakti. Therefore, in all the scriptures the instruction is to follow svarupa-siddha-bhakti.

In this short article, the intrinsic nature of suddha-bhakti has been explained. Having carefully reviewed all the instructions of our predecessor acaryas, in summary form we are presenting their heartfelt sentiments in the following verse:

purna cidatmake krsne jivasyanu cidatmanah upadhi-rahita cesta bhaktih svabhaviki mata

Sri Krsna is the complete, all-pervading consciousness who always possesses all potencies, and the jiva is the infinitesimal conscious entity who is likened to a single particle of light situated within a ray of the unlimited spiritual sun. The natural and unadulterated endeavour of the infinitesimal conscious entity towards the complete consciousness is called bhakti. The jiva’s persistence towards anyabhilasa (acting to fulfil desires other than the desire to please Sri Krsna), jnana and karma is called “acquiring material designation.” We should understand that the natural inherent endeavour of the jiva can only mean the

favourable cultivation of activities to please Sri Krsna.

Chapter 2 An Analysis of Bhakti-abhasa or the Semblance of Bhakti

yad bhaktyabhasa-leso ’pi dadati phalam uttamam

tamananda-nidhim krsna-caitanyam samupasmahe

“We worship Sri Krsna Caitanya, who is an ocean of transcendental bliss. Even a faint trace of devotion unto Him yields the highest result.”

My dear devotees! In the previous chapter we discussed the intrinsic nature (svarupa) and extrinsic characteristics (tatastha-laksana) of bhakti. In this chapter we will discuss bhakti- abhasa or the semblance of bhakti. We have already discussed a little about bhakti-abhasa while reviewing the tatastha-laksana of bhakti, and indeed, bhakti-abhasa is actually included within the category of the tatastha-laksana of bhakti. But since it is not really suitable for bhakti-abhasa to be thoroughly analysed in a section where both the svarupa and tatastha- laksana of bhakti are being described, it has become necessary to write a separate chapter on the topic of bhakti-abhasa. We hope that this article will serve to further clarify the subject matter of the previous chapter.

It has already been stated that the natural and unadulterated endeavour of the infinitesimal consciousness, the jiva, towards the complete consciousness, Krsna, is called bhakti. Jivas are situated in two stages, the liberated stage and the conditioned stage. In the liberated stage the jiva is free from all varieties of material relationships and is situated in his pure, constitutional position. In such a stage the jiva remains free from any material designation and hence within him there is no opportunity for the marginal characteristics of bhakti to exist. In the conditioned stage the jiva forgets his constitutional identity as his spiritual intelligence is deluded by the coverings of the subtle and gross bodies. In this stage the jiva acquires various material designations. When a mirror is free from dust, it gives a clear reflection of any object, but when it is covered with dust, it does not give a clear reflection. In such a condition we can say that the mirror has acquired a designation. When something covers the svabhava or nature of an object, then that covering is called the object’s designation. Material nature

covers the pure constitutional nature of the jiva, and that covering is the jiva's designation. It is said in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.2.37):

bhayam dvitiyabhinivesatah syad isad apetasya viparyayo 'smrtih tan-mayayato budha abhajet tam bhaktyaikayesam guru-devatatma

The jiva's innate tendency of unalloyed devotion towards the complete consciousness, Bhagavan Sri Krsna, is his nitya-dharma or eternal occupational duty. When the same jiva becomes opposed to Bhagavan, then he is gripped by fear and his intelligence is lost. Maya is the apara-sakti or external potency of Bhagavan. Considering the existence of this material world which has manifested from the external potency to be an independent element from Bhagavan, the unfortunate jiva falls into material existence. Intelligent people, accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a sad-guru, engage themselves in the exclusive bhajana of the para- ma-deva or supreme god, Sri Hari.

From the above verse we can conclude that the jiva's mayabhinivesa or absorption in the material energy imposes a false designation upon him. In such an adulterated stage, the bhakti of the jiva easily deteriorates and appears as bhakti-abhasa. Those who desire nothing other than entrance into suddha-bhakti should completely cross over bhakti-abhasa and take shelter of kevala-bhakti, exclusive and uninterrupted devotion. For this reason we are reviewing the topic of bhakti-abhasa in great detail. This in-depth analysis of bhakti-abhasa is extremely confidential; only intimate devotees are qualified to hear it. This is because those who consider bhakti-abhasa to be bhakti will never be pleased upon reading this book until they become truly fortunate. I am feeling immense pleasure in presenting this topic before the intimate devotees.

Srila Rupa Gosvami has not given a separate analysis of bhakti-abhasa in Bhakti-rasamrta- sindhu. Within the first half of the verse " anyabhilasita-sunyam jnana-karmady anavrtam" he has given a complete yet hidden explanation of bhakti-abhasa. While discussing the topic of rati-abhasa or the semblance of rati in his review of rati-tattva, Srila Rupa Gosvami has nicely explained bhakti-abhasa. I am presenting this deliberation on bhakti-abhasa upon the basis of the conception of rasacarya Srila Rupa Gosvami. Bhakti-abhasa exists prior to the stage of suddha-bhakti. From bhakti-abhasa the stages of suddha-bhakti and rati in suddha-bhakti appear in sequence. Srila Rupa Gosvami says (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.3.45), "pratibimbas tatha chaya ratyabhaso dvidha matah." There are two types of bhakti-abhasa: pratibimba-bhakti- abhasa

and chaya-bhakti-abhasa. The difference between the two is that pratibimba remains apart from the original object and appears as another separate entity, while chaya is completely dependent on the original object and from a position of proximity to it appears as a partial manifestation of the original object. When a tree is reflected in water, the tree which is visible in the water is called the pratibimba or reflection of the original tree. The reflection is never in touch with the original object. The existence of the reflection is due solely to the existence of the original object; still, the reflection is accepted as a separate identity. The form which appears because of the tree's blockage of the path of light and which resembles the form of the tree itself is called the chaya or shadow. The existence of the chaya is entirely dependent upon the original object. Srila Jiva Gosvami says, "tasman nirupadhitvam eva rater mukhya- svarupatvam sopadhitvam abhasatvam tattva gaunya vrttya pravarttamanatvam iti," which means that when bhakti is unadulterated, it is svarupa-bhakti or devotion in its intrinsic state, but when bhakti is adulterated, then it is called bhakti-abhasa. Bhakti-abhasa is manifested by the gauni-vrtti or secondary inclination of the jiva. The jiva's intrinsic inclination is called the mukhya-vrtti and the inclination which is obstructed or covered is called the gauni-vrtti. Pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa and chaya-bhakti-abhasa are both categorised as gauni-vrtti or secondary tendencies. When bhakti reaches its pure form, it is completely free from the tendencies of pratibimba and chaya. At that time only the original object itself, pure spontaneous devotion, is manifest.

Pratibimba bhakti-abhasa

Pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa can be divided into three categories: (1) nirvisesa-jnanavrta-bhakti- abhasa, (2) bahirmukha-karmavrta-bhakti-abhasa, and (3) viparita vastu me bhakti-buddhi- janita bhakti-abhasa.

(1) In nirvisesa-jnanavrta-bhakti-abhasa, bhakti remains hidden by a covering of impersonal knowledge. At that time a curtain of impersonal knowledge exists between the sadhaka and svarupa-siddha-bhakti, making direct realisation of svarupa-bhakti impossible.

The conception of impersonal jnana is that within cit-tattva or transcendence, names, forms, qualities, pastimes and other attributes don't exist. According to this philosophy, these attributes exist only in material objects and when the jiva becomes liberated from material existence, he merges into undifferentiated brahma. Wherever such nirvisesa-jnana exists, suddha-bhakti cannot manifest

there. Krsnanusilana is called suddha-bhakti. But the activities of bhakti are not possible in the nirvisesa stage because neither Krsna, the krsna-dasa-jiva, nor devotional endeavours are present. If someone believes that when the perfectional stage of liberation is achieved bhakti no longer exists due to the destruction of the mind, body and false ego, but simultaneously they continue to follow the process of bhakti to achieve such perfection, then how can their krsna-bhakti be called eternal and free from deceit? Such a person tries to please Krsna for the time being and in the end attempts to extinguish Krsna's existence. In precisely the same way, Vrkasura pleased Siva with his worship and after obtaining a boon from Siva that he could kill anyone by merely placing his hand on their head, he tried to kill Siva himself. The devotion of such a person is deceitful and temporary due to his ignorance of the intrinsic nature of nitya-siddha-bhakti. In Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (1.3.44, 46), Srila Rupa Gosvami has described the attributes of such deceitful bhakti:

kintu bala-camatkara-kari tac-cihna viksaya

abhijnena subodho 'yam ratyabhasah prakirtitah

asramabhista-nirvahi rati-laksana laksitah

bhogapavarga-saukhyamsa-vyanjakah pratibimbakah

By observing the symptoms of shedding tears and trembling in persons who desire material enjoyment and liberation, it may seem that they have developed krsna-rati or excessive attachment for Krsna. But only foolish people, who are easily influenced by a show of external symptoms, will consider such so-called rati as genuine. Those who are knowledgable know it as rati-abhasa. Such a person's trembling and shedding of tears are due to two reasons. The first reason is that they have a hankering for impersonal liberation and by remembering Krsna, who alone can award such mukti, they feel great pleasure. This pleasure is the cause of their shedding tears and trembling; it is not due to spontaneous love for Krsna. The second reason for their shedding tears and trembling is the happiness derived from thinking that simply by the performance of such bhakti-abhasa their inner desires for material enjoyment will be easily fulfilled.

varanasi-nivasi kascid ayam vyaharan harescaritam

yati-gosthyamutpulakah sincati gandadvayimasraih

Once, in the city of Varanasi, a sannyasi was chanting the names of Hari in an assembly of sannyasis and eventually he began trembling and tears started flowing from his eyes. While chanting harinama he was thinking, “Aha! By such a simple process I will attain impersonal liberation.” Srila Rupa Gosvami describes the cause of such a condition (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.3.47-48):

daivat sad-bhakta-sangena kirtanadyanusarinam

prayah prasanna-manasam bhogo moksadi-raginam

kesanciddhrdi bhavendoh pratibimba udancati

tad-bhakta hmnabhahsthasya tat samsarga-prabhavatah

Exhibiting such trembling and shedding of tears is not easy for an impersonalist because jnana and vairagya make the heart hard and push away all the symptoms of bhakti, which is very tender by nature. Even though in the process of sravana and kirtana conducted by the impersonalists the disease of the desires for sense gratification and liberation exists, they still feel a little pleasure in their hearts from their performance of sravana and kirtana. If at such a time by some good fortune they obtain the association of a pure devotee of Bhagavan, then by the effect of that association the bhava which has arisen like the moon in the sky of the hearts of pure devotees is reflected even in their hearts which are contaminated by the impersonal conception. Such an occurrence can sometimes cause a little ecstasy and shedding of tears. But when again they lack the association of such a devotee, they deride the tears and trembling of their own disciples as fraud or cheating. Hence, bhakti can never appear in the heart covered by impersonal jnana, but sometimes there is the appearance of bhakti-abhasa.

(2) In bahirmukha-karmavrta-bhakti-abhasa a blockage comprised of an external covering of karma or fruitive activities is produced by the gauna-vrtti or secondary tendency of bhakti. It is as if a curtain of fruitive activity is present between the relisher, the jiva and that which is to be relished, bhakti. This curtain covers the svarupa or intrinsic nature of bhakti. Varna-dharma, asrama-dharma and astanga-yoga are all classified as karma. Karma is of two types: nitya and naimittika. All actions which result in piety are considered karma. A detailed explanation of karma here would greatly enlarge this presentation. Those who specifically want to understand karma-tattva may read the initial pages of my

book Sri Caitanya-sik§amrta. The process of karma delineated in the books of the smarta-brahmanas is all external karma. The sandhya- vandana or prayers to be recited daily at dusk and so on which are suitable for the proper execution of one's varnasrama duties and which are mentioned in the books of the smartas are called nitya-karma or daily routine activities. The smartas consider these nitya-karma activities to be bhakti. Yet an in-depth review of these activities will reveal that they are also external. The symptoms of bhakti which are visible in them are due merely to pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa and not real bhakti. This is because the desired fruit of these activities is either the attainment of impersonal liberation or the pleasures of this world or the heavenly worlds. Some people consider the limbs of bhakti-tattva such as sravana and kirtana to be karma and the sravana and kirtana of karma-tattva to be bhakti. These misconceptions are caused by their ignorance of proper tattva. Although externally there appear to be many similarities between karma and sadhana-bhakti, there exists a fundamental difference between the two. Whatever action is performed to attain mundane happiness in this world or in the heavenly worlds is called karma. This happiness is classified as either sense gratification or relief from suffering in the form of impersonal liberation.

On the other hand, bhakti is the action performed with absorption in those sentiments which only help to increase our natural inborn inclination towards achieving kr§na-rati and where the performer has no other desire whatsoever. Despite accruing some other fruits by the performance of such activity, the performer considers that fruit to be very insignificant. Those acts which nourish suddha-bhakti are also considered bhakti because bhakti alone is the mother of bhakti; jnana and karma can never be capable of producing bhakti. My dear intimate devotees! You cannot satisfy the people engaged in gross activities by presenting before them this subtle difference between karma and bhakti. Only when their faith in karma and jnana dwindles by the accumulation of heaps of pious activities and by the effect of association with pure devotees of Bhagavan will the seedling of undeveloped bhakti appear in their hearts in the form of sraddha. Unless in possession of such sraddha, no one can understand the subtle difference between karma and bhakti. We should understand that if someone thinks that bhakti is simply another form of karma, then he won't be able to relish the transcendental sentiments of suddha-bhakti in his heart. The difference between bitter and sweet can be distinguished only by tasting them, not by reasoning. After actually tasting them, it becomes much easier to consider and then determine which of them is superior. Those inclined towards karma sometimes dance, tremble, and shed tears while chanting harinama, but all of

this is pratibimba- bhakti, not suddha-bhakti, and is the result of their previous good fortune of having associated with devotees as described in the verses which were quoted previously such as “sat-bhakta- sangena”. Their trembling and shedding of tears are just bhoga-saukhyamsa-vyanjaka or symptoms produced by sensual pleasure and are considered mere pratibimba only. At such times they are either immersed in thoughts of heavenly pleasure or absorbed in an imaginary ocean of the pleasure derived from liberation. This is pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa.

(3) In present times we can easily point out viparita vastu me bhakti-buddhi-janita bhakti- abhasa which is produced by the visualisation of bhakti in activities which are actually opposed to bhakti and which is prevalent in the pancopasana and in the isvara-pranidhana or concentration upon the isvara within the yoga process. Those known as pancopasana consider that there are five sampradayas—Saiva (worshippers of Siva), Sakta (worshippers of Durga), Ganapatya (worshippers of Ganesa), Saura (worshippers of Surya), and Vaisnava (worshippers of Visnu). All five are followers of impersonalism. The Vaisnava line mentioned here is not the Vaisnava line which follows the genuine principle of bhakti. The four genuine Vaisnava sam- pradayas are not included within the Vaisnava pancopasana-sampradaya mentioned here. Sri Ramanujacarya, Sri Madhvacarya, Sri Visnusvami and Sri Nimbaditya are the four acaryas of the four bona fide sampradayas of suddha-bhakti which are described in the verse sri-brahma- rudra-sanakascatvarah sampradayinah. To indicate these four sampradayas, it is said in the scriptures, “ sampradaya-vihina ye mantras te nisphala matah,” which means mantras not accepted from the four bona fide sampradayas yield no results.

Vaisnavas who belong to the pancopasana section are basically impersonalists, not pure devotees. All the pancopasakas believe that the mrntis of their five worshipable deities are ultimately imaginary. In other words they believe that brahma has no form and that these forms are conceived only as a convenience for worship while still in the bodily conception of life. According to their concept, when one’s worship becomes perfect they merge into impersonal brahma and the devotion they offered to those ‘imaginary’ mrntis whom they consider to be the Isvara is not eternal. This activity is simply jnanavrta-bhakti-abhasa. One cannot attain suddha-bhakti as long as he believes such jnanavrta-bhakti-abhasa to be real bhakti. If symptoms of bhakti such as trembling and the profuse shedding of tears are detected in the performers of this type of bhakti-abhasa, they should be taken only as symptoms produced by sensual pleasure

and mere pratibimba or a reflection of the genuine symptoms. Just as the pan-copasakas display bhakti-abhasa towards their ‘imaginary’ mrntis of demigods, similarly yogis also display trembling and shedding of tears towards their ‘imaginary’ murti of the Supersoul. These are all examples of pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa. The concept that pratibimba-bhakti- abhasa will gradually develop and will ultimately transform into suddha-bhakti is totally false because by rejecting impersonal meditation and the benefits sought from fruitive activities the existence of this tattva (bhakti-abhasa) totally vanishes. There remains no possibility of those practicing pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa actually being benefited unless they completely purify their consciousness from its very root. Impersonalists such as the four Kumaras and the topmost jnani Sukadeva Gosvami could only begin new and more exalted lives when they completely renounced their previous faiths and accepted the path of bhakti. By the strength of their new, exalted lives they achieved the status of our acaryas. Regarding pratibimba-bhakti- abhasa, Srila Rupa Gosvami says (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.3.42-43):

vimuktakhila tarsair ya muktair api vimrgyate

ya krsnenatigopyasu bhajadbhyo ’pi na diyate

sa bhukti-mukti-kamatvac chuddham bhaktim akurvatam

hrdaye sambhavaty esam katham bhagavat" ratih

“How is it possible for the rare bhagavat-rati or intense attachment for Bhagavan in the stage of bhava to appear in the hearts of those desiring material sense gratification and impersonal liberation when such rati is being eagerly sought after by liberated souls who have completely renounced all varieties of material desires and is not easily granted by Sri Krsna to those engaged in His exclusive bhajana?”

It is imperative to mention here that those who consider the pleasure derived from illicit association with women and taking intoxication to be bhagavat-rati are themselves polluted and may pollute others also.

Chaya-bhakti-abhasa

It is very important for a sadhaka to understand chaya-bhakti-abhasa. Unlike

pratibimba- bhakti-abhasa, chaya-bhakti-abhasa is not crooked and shrewd; it has simplicity and virtue. Srila Rupa Gosvami has written as follows regarding chaya-bhakti-abhasa (Bhakti-rasamrta- sindhu 1.3.49-53):

ksudra kautuhalamayi cancala duhkha-harini

rates chaya bhavet kincit tat-sadrsyavalambini

hari-priya-kriya-kala-desa-patradi-sangamat

apy anusangikadesa kvacid ajnesvapiksyate

kintu bhagyam vina nasau bhavac chayapy udancati

yad abhyudayatah ksemam tatra syad uttarottaram

hari-priya-janasyaiva prasadabhara-labhatah

bhavabhaso 'pi sahasa bhavatvam upagacchati

tasminn evaparadhena bhavabhaso 'py anuttamah

kramena ksayam apnoti khastha purna-sasi yatha

There are a few similarities between chaya-bhakti-abhasa and suddha-bhakti, but by nature the practitioner of chaya-bhakti-abhasa feels some slight curiosity concerning what fruit will be attained by following this process, his mind is restless and some of his material distress is eradicated. Chaya-bhakti-abhasa is sometimes visible even within a person bereft of spiritual knowledge just by the influence of their having come into contact with the times, places and devotees that are related to Bhagavan. Whether one be a pancopasaka or a sampradayika (coming in a bona fide parampara), one cannot attain the stage of chaya-bhakti-abhasa without some special good fortune having arisen within him because upon the shadow of bhava arising just once—in whatever minute degree it may be—it will certainly grow and result in progressive benefit for the sadhaka. Upon obtaining the mercy of a pure Vaisnava, bhava- bhasa can suddenly progress up to the stage of bhava. But on the other hand, if one commits offences at the feet of pure Vaisnavas even the topmost bhavabhasa gradually deteriorates just like the gradual waning of the moon in krsnapaksa, the dark fortnight of the lunar month. Chaya-bhakti-abhasa is of two types: (1) sva-rupa-jnanabhava-

janita-bhakti-abhasa or bhakti- abhasa which appears in the absence of knowledge of one’s inherent identity, and (2) bhakti- uddipaka-vastu-sakti-janita-bhakti-abhasa or bhakti-abhasa in which the stimulation for bhakti is caused by the influence of having come into contact with objects such as time, place and circumstance which are related to Bhagavan.

(1) The svarupa-jnana or intrinsic knowledge concerning the sadhaka (the practitioner), sad- hana (the practice) and sadhya (the object of achievement) is nondifferent from the svarupa of suddha-bhakti. When such svarupa-jnana has not yet arisen within a sadhaka but the desire to cross over the ocean of material existence has come within him, then whatever symptoms of bhakti which are visible in him in that condition are merely bhakti-abhasa. This bhakti-abhasa transforms into suddha-bhakti when one obtains svarupa-jnana. Even for Vaisnavas who are duly initiated into the genuine sampradaya the vastu-prabha, or illumination of one’s eternal identity arising from their diksa-mantra which they received from their diksa-guru, won’t appear until they receive this svarupa-jnana by the mercy of a siksa-guru. Due to ignorance of svarupa-jnana, svarupa-siddha-bhakti remains covered and hence only bhakti-abhasa is visible. The devotion of pancopasakas who remain aloof from the teachings of impersonalism and perform the worship of their favourite deity by considering Him to be a direct expansion of Bhagavan and the supreme goal is also chaya-bhakti-abhasa. Still, there is a great deal of difference between pancopasaka Vaisnavas and sampradayika Vaisnavas. The nistha or firm faith of sampradayika Vaisnavas in the personal aspect of Bhagavan is much stronger than that of pancopasaka Vaisnavas. By receiving proper instruction on tattva, a sampradayika Vaisnava remains hopeful of reaching a very exalted stage of suddha Vaisnavism, but a pancopasaka cannot be as hopeful of achieving such an exalted stage of Vaisnavism by receiving instruction on the tattva according to their own custom. The accessibility of association of pure devotees for sampradayika Vaisnavas is much better than it is for pancopasakas. If by some fortune the pancopasakas obtain the association of devotees and simultaneously keep themselves aloof from the association of impersonalists, they can then be refined by the sampradayika system and can begin pursuing the path of suddha-bhakti. Two scriptural evidences mentioned in Bhakti-sandarbha are being quoted here. In the Skanda Purana it is confirmed that sampradayika Vaisnavas achieve their desired result even by the practice of chaya-bhakti-abhasa. Sri Mahadeva says (Hari-bhakti-vilasa 11.200):

diksa-matrena krsnasya nara moksam labhanti vai

kim punar ye sada bhaktya pujayanty acyutam narah

"Just by receiving initiation into the krsna-mantra one can obtain mukti, so what can be said about what one can achieve by performing bhagavad-bhakti?"

Regarding pancopasakas who remaining free from pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa have developed chaya-bhakti-abhasa, the Adi-varaha Purana (211.85) says:

janmantara-sahasresu samaradhya vrsadhvajam

vaisnavatvam labhet kascit sarva-papaksaye sati

"If one worships Ganesa for thousands of births and becomes free from all sins, then it is possible to come to the platform of Vaisnavism."

The scriptural conclusion is that saktas or worshippers of the goddess Durga are gradually elevated to bhakti, either personal or impersonal, by first becoming worshippers of the sun- god, then worshippers of Ganesa, then worshippers of Siva, then pancopasaka Vaisnavas, and finally sampradayika Vaisnavas. By the careful analysis of the words of the scriptures it is understood that by the influence of association with pure devotees chaya-bhakti-abhasa trans-forms into suddha-bhakti.

(2) In the scriptures there are many examples of bhakti-uddipaka vastu-sakti janita bhakti- abhasa. The tulasi plant, maha-prasada, vaisnava-prasada, the days of devotional observance such as Ekadasi, the Deity of Bhagavan, the holy dhamas, the Ganga, the footdust of Vaisnavas and so on are various objects which act as bhakti-uddipaka or stimuli to bhakti. The jiva receives immense benefit even by coming in contact with these objects unknowingly. Sometimes benefit is accrued even when the innocent jiva unknowingly commits an offence to them. Coming into contact with these objects in this way is also bhakti-abhasa. Devotees won't be astonished upon witnessing such remarkable results of bhakti-abhasa; all such results are due solely to the immense power of suddha-bhakti. If the processes of jnana and yoga are not executed purely and if they are not supported by bhakti-abhasa, then they are incapable of granting any result. On the other hand, Bhakti-devi is completely independent; regardless of the motives of those who take shelter of her, she fulfils their innermost desires. Although all these results are visible in bhakti-abhasa, it is not the prescribed conduct. The execution of suddha-bhakti is our only duty. Those who desire absolute success should not in any circum-stances give a place to pratibimba-

bhakti-abhasa within their hearts. By the strength of bhajana performed under the guidance of pure Vaisnavas, they should cross beyond chaya-bhakti- abhasa and take exclusive shelter at the lotus feet of Bhakti-devi. Therefore, all of you kindly accept the following principle presented by Visva-vaisnava dasa:

pratibimbas tatha chaya bhedattatva-vicaratah

bhaktyabhaso dvidha so ’pi varjaniyah rasarthibhih

Those who desire to relish bhakti-rasa should always remain aloof from both types of bhakti-abhasa. By reviewing the tattva, it is concluded that bhakti-abhasa is of two types, pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa and chaya-bhakti-abhasa. Pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa has a tendency to make the jiva commit offences while chaya-bhakti-abhasa is incomplete in itself. The execution of suddha-bhakti is the only recommended activity for the jiva.

Offences towards Bhakti

This is a very dangerous item. We execute so many limbs of bhakti, such as accepting the diksa-mantra from a bona fide guru, everyday applying tilaka to twelve different parts of the body, performing arcana unto Sri Krsna, observing the vow of Ekadasi, chanting harinama and remembering Krsna according to one’s ability, visiting the holy places like Vrndavana and so forth. But unfortunately we don’t try hard enough to avoid committing offences at the feet of Bhakti-devi. Giving the example of the activities of Mukunda, Sriman Mahaprabhu highlighted to His devotees the various symptoms of offence towards bhakti (Sri Caitanya-Bhagavat, Madhya-lila, 10.185, 188-190, 192):

ksane dante trna laya, ksane jathi mare

o khada-jathiya—beta na dekhibe more

prabhu bole—“o beta jakhana yatha jaya

sei mata katha kahi tathaya misaya

vasistha padaye jabe advaitera sange

bhakti-yoge nace gaya trna kari dante

anya sampradaye giya jakhana sambhaya

nahi mane bhakti jathi maraye sadaya

bhakti-sthane uhara haila aparadha

eteke uhara haila darasana-badha"

Mahaprabhu said, "I can never bestow mercy upon Mukunda because sometimes he displays his humility by taking straw between his teeth and at other times he attacks Me; in other words, he keeps one of his hands at My feet (displaying humility) and the other at My neck (attacking Me). According to his own convenience, sometimes he behaves as My follower and at other times he criticises Me. Hence, I cannot reward him. Wherever he goes, seeking his own benefit he represents himself accordingly and mixes with people. Sometimes he supports the doctrine of Mayavada by reciting from the book Yoga-vasistha which is endowed with Advaita philosophy and at other times he shows his faith by abandoning the impersonal concept and cultivating krsna-bhakti by becoming meek and humble and dancing and performing kirtana. When he enters the sect of the impersonalists, he rejects the eternity of bhakti and condemns the devotees with the weapon of argument and logic. In this way he has committed an offence at the feet of Bhakti-devi. Therefore, I cannot give him My darsana."

Mukunda Datta is an eternal associate of the Lord, so whatever Mahaprabhu said to him in this regard is only a lila or pastime. But Mahaprabhu's objectives are very grave, so there must be an extremely confidential reason for His statements here. His confidential instruction is that we cannot please Krsna just by accepting diksa and executing the various limbs of bhakti. Only those who have unwavering faith in exclusive devotion can satisfy Him. Those who have developed such faith accept the path of suddha-bhakti with great determination. They don't visit places where doctrines which are unrelated to suddha-bhakti are discussed. They go to places where the topic of suddha-bhakti is being discussed and they listen with great interest. Simplicity, determination and exclusive desire for bhakti are the natural characteristics of such unalloyed devotees. They never approve of statements or activities which are opposed to the principles of bhakti merely to gain popularity; pure devotees always remain indifferent to such things.

These days most people don't try to avoid the above-mentioned offences. Just

from seeing the devotees or hearing bhagavat-katha they display symptoms of apparent spiritual ecstacy such as trembling and the shedding of tears and they support spiritual philosophy in assem-blies, but afterwards they are again seen becoming mad after sense gratification. Therefore, dear readers! What can be said about the so-called nistha of those who display these bogus sentiments? We understand that just to earn fame they display these symptoms before the devotees. Out of greed to acquire fame or other material benefits they display varieties of this sort of conduct. It is a matter of great sorrow that these people not only commit an offence at the feet of Bhakti-devi by propagating deceitful philosophies in the name of bhakti, but also completely ruin the spiritual lives of the jivas of this world.

Dear readers! We should remain very careful not to ever commit any offence at the feet of Bhakti-devi. First of all, we must vow to perform bhakti while remaining indifferent to all else. We must never do anything or speak anything which is contrary to bhakti just to gain popularity or collect followers. We must remain simple and straightforward in our actions. There shouldn't be any difference between our words and our actions. We must never try to gain the favour of those who are indifferent to bhakti by displaying to them artificial symptoms of advanced devotion. We will always remain chaste to the principles of suddha-bhakti and will never support any other doctrine. Our external conduct and the feelings within our hearts should be one and the same.

Chapter 3 An Analysis of the Natural Attributes of Bhakti

suddha-bhakti-svabhavasya prabhavan yat-padasrayat

sadaiva labhate jivastam caitanyam aham bhaje

“I worship Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. By taking shelter of His feet, the jiva forever obtains the potency issuing from the very nature of suddha-bhakti. ”

Suddha-bhakti manifests along with six symptoms: (1) klesaghni—it brings immediate relief from all kinds of material distress, (2) subhada—it brings all auspiciousness, (3) moksa- laghutakrta—liberation becomes insignificant before it, (4) sudurlabha—it is rarely achieved, (5) sandrananda-visesatma—it grants intense transcendental pleasure and (6) krsnakarsini—it is the only means to attract Sri Krsna. In the stage of sadhana-bhakti only the first two symptoms appear, in the stage of bhava the first four symptoms appear, and in the stage of prema all six symptoms appear. These six symptoms will now be systematically discussed.

(1) Klesaghni—Bhakti-devi completely removes all the klesa or distress of those who take shelter of suddha-bhakti. Klesa are of three types: papa or sin, papa-bija or sins in their seed form and avidya or ignorance. Due to the sins committed by the jiva in innumerable lifetimes or the sins which he may commit in his present or future lives, he has to suffer various types of distress. The prominent sins have been analysed in the fifth wave of the second shower of Sri Caitanya-siksamrta. These sins can be further divided into two categories: prarabdha and aprarabdha.

Prarabdha sins are those for which the jiva must suffer the reactions in his present life span. The sins whose reactions will be suffered in one’s next life are called aprarabdha. The sins committed by the jiva in innumerable lifetimes are added to the series of previous aprarabdha sins and in his next birth fructify as prarabdha sins. Hence, within the jurisdiction of eternal law, the jiva is bound to suffer the reactions of the sins he has committed in his innumerable lifetimes.

Birth in a brahmana family, a Muslim family, a wealthy family, or a poor family, or having beautiful personal features or being ugly are all the results of prarabdha-karma. Birth in a yavana or untouchable family is due to prarabdha sins. Suddha-bhakti destroys both types of sins, prarabdha and aprarabdha. If the path of jnana is followed properly it destroys aprarabdha-karma. But according to the scriptures of the jnanis, one must suffer the reactions of his prarabdha-karma. But bhakti also destroys prarabdha-karma:

yan-namadheya-sravananukirttanad

yat-prahvanad yat smaranad api kvacit

svado 'pi sadyah savanaya kalpate

kutah punas te bhagavan nu darsanat

Srimad-Bhagavatam 333.6

"O my dear Lord! By hearing and chanting Your holy names, by offering pranama unto You and by remembering You, even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately obtains the right to perform Vedic sacrifices; in other words, he acquires the status of a brahmana. What to speak then of the benefit one can achieve by receiving Your direct darsana?"

This verse highlights how bhakti easily destroys the prarabdha sins which result in taking birth in a low-class family. Now see how bhakti also destroys aprarabdha sins:

aprarabdha-phalam papam kutam bijam phalonmukham

kramenaiva praliyeta visnu-bhakti-ratatmanam

Padma Purana and Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.23

"For those who have undeviating and exclusive attachment for visnu-bhakti, their (i) aprarabdha or the accumulated stock of sins which are lying in a dormant condition, (ii) kuta or sins which are tending toward producing seeds, which means that they are beginning to take shape as sinful desires, (iii) bija or seeds which are already established as sinful desires and (iv) prarabdha or fructified sins are all destroyed in sequence." The purport is that for the

destruction of their sins, the devotees need not perform any separate acts of either karma or jnana as atonement.

The desires to commit sinful activities which are situated within the heart of the jiva are called papa-bija or the seeds of sins. Papa-bija can only be destroyed by bhakti:

tais tany aghani puyante tapo-dana-vratadibhih

nadharmajam tad-dhrdayam tad apisanghri-sevaya

Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.2.17 and Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.24

The systematic methods for the atonement of sins which are prescribed in the scriptures, such as the performance of difficult vows like candrayana and other activities on the path of ordinary karma as well as the performance of austerities and the giving of charity, destroy only those sins for which they are specifically prescribed. Those atonements do not destroy the seeds of sin, or in other words the sinful desires which have arisen due to ignorance. Sinful desires can be removed only by engaging in the service of Krsna, meaning that besides bhakti there is no other means which can expunge sinful desires from the heart. As soon as Bhakti- dev" appears in the heart, all the sinful desires as well as any desires for piety are destroyed at the root. In the Padma Purana and in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, it is described how bhakti eradicates avidya:

krtanuyatra vidyabhir hari-bhaktir anuttama

avidyam nirdahaty asu davajvaleva pannagim

Padma Purana and Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.26

“When hari-bhakti appears in the heart, she is followed by vidya-sakti which immediately dispels the ignorance situated within the heart of the jiva, just as a serpent is burnt by a blazing forest fire.”

yat-pada-pankaja-palasa-vilasa-bhaktya

karmasayam grathitam udgrathayanti santah

tadvan na rikta-matayo yatayo ’pi ruddha-

sroto-ganas tam aranam bhaja vasudevam

Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.22.23 and Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.25

“Ascetics who have detached their minds from the objects of the senses by keeping their senses away from those objects cannot easily untie the knot of the false ego from their hearts, whereas devotees who are exclusively engaged in transcendental loving service unto the lotus feet of Sri Krsna can untie this knot in no time. Hence, one should engage in the bhajana of Sri Krsna, the supreme shelter.”

Though the cultivation of jnana can dispel avidya to some extent, without taking shelter of bhakti a sadhaka will certainly fall down:

ye ’nye ’ravindaksa vimukta-maninas

tvayy asta-bhavad avisuddha-buddhayah

aruhya krcchrena param padam tatah

patanty adho ’nadrta-yusmad-anghrayah

Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.2.32

“O lotus-eyed Lord! Although by the cultivation of neti-neti or the negativity principle nondevotees endeavour to attain something different from dull matter and consider themselves liberated, their intelligence is impure. With great difficulty they cross the ocean of nescience to attain the stage of brahma, but because they have not taken permanent shelter of Your lotus feet, they fall down from such a stage.”

O intimate devotees! Having surely heard the word ‘avidya’ before, you must be eager to know its intrinsic nature. Therefore, I will explain a few points in this regard. Sri Krsna possesses unlimited varieties of saktis or potencies. Among them, cit-sakti, jiva-sakti and maya- sakti are prominent. Cit-sakti displays Bhagavan’s dhama or abode and all the paraphernalia necessary for His lila. Another name for cit-sakti is svarupa-sakti. Jiva-sakti produces innumerable jivas. By nature jivas are purely cit-tattva or spiritual, but due to their incomplete constitution they can be trapped by maya. By harbouring selfish desires they become opposed to Krsna and are trapped by maya, and by desiring to be

disposed towards Krsna they are freed from maya and engage in His service. This is the difference between conditioned and liberated jivas. Maya acts in two ways upon the intrinsic nature of the conditioned jiva: through the avidya potency and through the vidya potency. Through its avidya aspect, maya covers the constitutional pure ego of the jiva, thus creating a false or distorted ego by which the jiva identifies himself with gross matter. This shackle of avidya is the cause of the jiva's conditioned stage. Becoming free from avidya and devoid of false designations, the jiva attains the stage of liberation. Thus avidya is nothing more than a special potency of maya which makes the jiva forget his constitutional position. Avidya causes karma-vasana or the desire for fruitive activity in the jiva. These desires initiate the process of sin and piety. This avidya is the root cause of all the difficulty experienced by the jiva. Besides bhakti no other process is capable of eliminating this avidya. Karma can only destroy sins, and jnana can destroy at the root the desires which cause both sin and piety. But bhakti totally eradicates at the root the sins themselves, the desires to perform both sin and piety, and the prime cause of these desires, avidya.

(2) Bhakti is auspicious by nature. Srila Rupa Gosvami says (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.27):

subhani prinanam sarva-jagatam anuraktata

sad-gunah sukham ityadinyakhyatani manisibhih

“Scholars define subha or true auspiciousness as possessing love for all living entities and becoming the object of affection of all living entities as well as possessing all good qualities, happiness, and other similar auspicious achievements.”

The Padma Purana explains what is meant by possessing love for all living entities and being the object of affection of all living entities (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.28):

yenarcito haris tena tarpitani jaganty api

rajyanti jantavas tatra jangamah sthavara api

“Those who have worshipped Sri Hari have satisfied the entire universe. Therefore, all living entities, both animate and inanimate, love them.” The purport is those who are devoted exclusively to hari-bhajana love everyone

without any envy; therefore, others also love them.

In devotees all varieties of good qualities develop naturally. This is easily verified by examining the lives of devotees. In this regard it says in Srimad-Bhagavatam (5.18.12, as well as Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.29):

yasyasti bhaktir-bhagavaty-akincana

sarvair gunais tatra samasate surah

haravabhaktasya kuto mahad-guna

manorathenasati dhavato bahih

Those who possess undeviated and exclusive bhakti for Bhagavan become the residence of all the demigods and all good qualities. How can such great qualities exist in non-devotees whose illicit desires compel them to run after sense gratification? The qualities of compassion, truthfulness, humility, detachment, spiritual awareness and so forth appear only in those hearts in which bhakti has arisen. Even upon numerous endeavours these qualities don’t appear in those hearts which are occupied with desires for sense gratification. Though happiness is included within auspiciousness, it is being reviewed separately. By nature bhakti bestows all auspiciousness.

Srila Rupa Gosvami has written that the happiness of the conditioned soul can be divided into three categories: vaisayika-sukha, brahma-sukha and aisvara-sukha. Vaisayika-sukha is all the varieties of mundane pleasure which are found within this material world. The eighteen types of mystic perfection and heavenly enjoyment are also considered vaisayika-sukha. Upon realising that mundane pleasure is ultimately distressful and temporary, the endeavours to eradicate it through the process of neti-neti is called vyatireka or the principle of negation. The impersonal pleasure derived from these vyatireka efforts through eliminating all mundane feelings and imagining oneself to be one with the unchangeable brahma is called brahma-sukha. The happiness derived from taking permanent shelter of Bhagavan, who possesses all opulences in full, is called aisvara-sukha. By nature hari-bhakti bestows all varieties of happiness. According to one’s specific qualification and desires, it bestows either vaisayika-sukha, brahma- sukha or aisvara-sukha.

siddhayah paramascarya bhukti-muktis ca sasvati

nityam ca paramanandam bhaved govinda bhaktitah

Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.31

"Anima, mahima, laghima, prapti, isita, vasitva, prakamya and kamavasayita— these eight types of perfections, all varieties of material enjoyment, brahma-sukha and paramananda or the supreme bliss can all be achieved by performing bhakti for Sri Govinda."

It is written in the SriHari-bhakti-sudhodaya (and Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.32):

bhuyo 'pi yace devesa tvayi bhakti-drdhastu me

ya moksanta-caturvarga-phalada sukhada lata

"O Lord of the demigods! I repeatedly beg for the boon of attaining exclusive devotion unto You by which, according to their specific qualification, some devotees obtain the fruits of wealth, religiosity, sense gratification and liberation while others obtain the fruit of the happiness of possessing prema for You."

The purport is that bhakti is capable of bestowing all types of happiness but the unalloyed devotees, considering the pleasure derived from sense gratification and brahma-sukha to be insignificant, search exclusively for prema-sukha. Without the help of bhakti, the paths of jnana and karma are incapable of yielding any result. Hence, in any condition, happiness cannot be obtained without bhakti.

(3) Moksa-laghutakrta: By nature bhakti renders the conception of mukti insignificant. It is said in the Narada-pancaratra (and Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.34):

hari-bhakti mahadevyah sarva muktyadi siddhayah

bhuktayas cadbhutas tasyas cetikavad anuvratah

"The various kinds of perfections headed by mukti and the entirety of mundane pleasures follow behind the goddess of hari-bhakti, Bhakti-devi, as her maidservants."

Srila Rupa Gosvami has also said this very beautifully (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.33):

manag eva prarudhayam hrdaye bhagavad ratau

purusarthas tu catvaras trnayante samantatah

“Only when one understands the fourfold achievements of economic development, religiosity, sense gratification and liberation to be very insignificant can it be accepted that suddha- bhakti is appearing within him.”

(4) Attainment of hari-bhakti is extremely rare, sudurlabha. Srila Rupa Gosvami writes about the extreme rarity of bhakti (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.35):

sadhanaughair anasangair alabhya sucirad api

harina casv adeyeti dvidha sa syat sudurlabha

There are two reasons for hari-bhakti being so rare. First, it cannot be achieved in spite of engaging in many varieties of sadhana for a long period of time as long as one is bereft of firm faith and unwavering persistence. Second, Sri Hari does not easily grant His bhakti even though one may be engaged in asanga-yukta-sadhana or sadhana endowed with unflinching attachment. The word ‘asanga’ implies expertise in bhajana. Without expertise in bhajana, no sadhana can grant hari-bhakti. By executing sadhana with expertise in bhajana for a long period of time and after namaparadha and vaisnava-aparadha have been dispelled, by the mercy of Bhagavan suddha-bhakti which establishes one in knowledge of his constitutional identity arises in the heart.

jnanatah sulabha muktir bhuktir yajnadi punyatah seyam sadhana-sahasrair hari-bhaktih sudurlabha

Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.36

“By the cultivation of jnana one can easily obtain mukti and by the performance of sacrifices and other pious activities one can also easily obtain bhukti, but despite performing innumerable sadhanas one cannot achieve hari-bhakti so easily.”

Bhagavan does not easily grant His bhakti, as confirmed in Srimad-Bhagavatam (5.6.18 and Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.37):

rajan patir gurur alam bhavatam yadunam daivam priyah kula-patih kva ca kinkaro vah astv evam anga bhajatam bhagavan mukundo muktim dadati karhicit sma na bhakti-yogam

"My dear King Pariksit! Lord Mukunda Himself was the protector, guru, istadeva (worshipable Deity), well-wisher and kula-pati (head of the dynasty) of the Pandavas and the Yadu dynasty. Sometimes He even became their obedient servant. It is a matter of great fortune because Bhagavan easily grants mukti to those engaged in His bhajana, but He doesn't easily award His prema, which is far superior to mukti."

In his commentary to this verse, Srila Jiva Gosvami comments, "tasmad asangenapi krte sad- hana-bhute saksad bhakti-yoge sati yavat phala-bhute bhakti-yoge gadhasaktir na jayate tavan na dadatity arthah": those who engage in bhagavad-bhajana by executing the ninefold limbs of bhakti are not granted suddha-bhakti by Bhagavan until they develop strong attachment for rati-tattva which is the fruit of the perception of one's eternal identity. Until that time comes, one's bhakti remains in the form of chaya-bhakti-abhasa.

(5) Sandrananda-visesatma: By nature bhakti is very intense ananda or transcendental pleasure. It has already been mentioned that Bhagavan is the complete saccidananda-svarupa and the jiva is anucidananda or an infinitesimal particle of spiritual bliss who is likened to a single particle of light situated within a ray of the unlimited spiritual sun. Hence, cit and ananda are also present within the jiva in minute quantity. People generally understand the word ananda to mean mundane pleasure, but whatever pleasure can be derived from all material pleasures combined is extremely negligible when placed before ananda-tattva. Material pleasure is extremely weak and momentary, whereas cidananda, transcendental pleasure, is extremely intense. Bhakti is very intense transcendental pleasure and the intrinsic pleasure of the jivas. Brahmananda is negligible before bhakti. Brahmananda is not the eternal bliss of the jiva; it is the so-called pleasure obtained from the negation of matter and material activities. Srila Rupa Gosvami has said (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.38):

brahmanando bhaved esa cet pararddha-guni-krtah

naiti bhakti-sukhambhodheh paramanu-tulam api

“Even if the brahmananda experienced by impersonalists is multiplied by ten million times, the resulting ananda won’t be equal to even a drop of the ocean of pleasure derived from bhakti.” The purport is that by simple imagination we may extend brahmananda to whatever extent, but in reality it cannot even come near the intrinsic pleasure of the jiva, what to speak of equalling it. The constitutional pleasure of the jiva is inborn and hence natural. Brahmananda is unnatural due to arising from the jiva’s distorted endeavours and hence it is temporary. It is said in Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya (and Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.39):

tvat-saksat-karanahlada-visuddhabdhi-sthitasya me

sukhani gospadayante brahmany api jagad-guro

“O Bhagavan! By attaining Your darsana, I am now established in the ocean of pure bliss. What to speak of material pleasure, even brahma-sukha now seems as insignificant as the water in a calf’s hoof-print.”

There are many similar statements found in the scriptures.

(6) Krsnakarsini: Bhakti is the only means to attract Krsna. As Srila Rupa Gosvami writes (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.41):

krtva harim prema-bhajam priya-varga-samanvitam

bhaktir vasi-karotiti sri-krsnakarsini mata

“ Suddha-bhakti overpowers Sri Krsna and all His dearmost associates with prema; this very ability to attract Sri Krsna is actually the inherent nature of Bhakti-devi.”

The purport of this is that in the stage of sadhana-bhakti, as long as suddha-bhakti hasn’t arisen within the heart, a sadhaka is performing bhakti-abhasa. At this stage the attainment of suddha-bhakti is very rare. But when suddha-bhakti does appear in the heart—even in the stage of sadhana—a little of the splendour of the limbs of bhajana begins to blossom. At that time realisation of the jiva’s eternal identity and realisation of the true intrinsic nature of bha- gavat-tattva is kindled by the medium of that splendour. Subsequently, a powerful agitation in the form of deep attachment for bhakti develops within the heart of the devotee.

Thus, the appearance of this stage of bhajana causes suddha-bhakti-sadhana to quickly unfold into the stage of rati or bhava and to ultimately fully blossom into prema. In the stage of bhava, bhakti attracts Sri Krsna along with His dearmost companions, but in the stage of prema, bhakti makes the sadhaka an instrument of sri-krsna-lila and thus induces him to relish the topmost rasa. This topic will be explained more clearly ahead. Visva-vaisnava dasa comments on this subject in the following five verses:

klesaghni subhada-bhaktir yada sa sadhanatmika

hrdaye baddha-jivanam tatastha-laksananvita (1)

klesaghni subhada moksa-laghutakrt sudurlabha

sa bhaktir bhava-rupena yavat tisthati cetasi (2)

prema-rupa yada bhaktis tada tat-tad-gunanvita

sandrananda-visesatma sri-krsnakarsani ca sa (3)

muktanam eva sa sasvat svarupananda-rupini

sambandha-svarupa nityam rajate jiva-krsnayoh (4)

bhaktyabhasena ya labhya muktir maya nikrntani

sa katham bhagavad-bhakteh samyam kanksati cetika (5)

“There are three stages of bhakti: sadhana, bhava and prema. Bhakti in the stage of sadhana has two aspects: klesaghnatva, meaning it removes all types of material distress, and subha- datva, meaning it offers the supreme auspiciousness. In the stage of bhava, four aspects of bhakti are visible: klesaghnatva, subhadatva, moksa-laghutakaritva, meaning it reveals to the practitioner the insignificance of liberation, and sudurlabhatva, meaning it is extremely rare. In the stage of prema, over and above these four attributes, two more aspects are visible: san-drananda-visesatma, meaning it grants extremely intense transcendental pleasure, and sri- krsnakarsini, meaning it is the only means to attract Sri Krsna. In the conditioned stage of the jiva, the three intrinsic attributes of bhakti, that is sandrananda-svarupatva, sri-krsnakarsatva and sudurlabhatva, remain mixed with its three marginal characteristics, that is

klesaghnatva, subhadatva and moksa-laghutakaritva. In the liberated stage, the bhakti of the jiva acts between the jiva and Krsna as eternal loving service in a particular relationship and as the jiva's intrinsic transcendental pleasure. The mukti which dispels the covering of maya can be attained simply by the performance of bhakti-abhasa. Since such mukti is just one of the ordinary maidservants among the many maidservants of Bhakti-devi, how can she aspire to be equated with Bhakti-devi?"

Chapter 4 An Analysis of the Qualification for Bhakti

karma-jnana viragadi-cestam hitva samantatah

sraddhavan bhajate yam sri-caitanyam aham bhaje

“I worship Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is always served by faithful devotees who have completely given up the pursuit of karma, jnana and dry renunciation.”

In the first chapter we discussed the intrinsic nature of suddha-bhakti, in the second chapter we discussed the intrinsic nature of bhakti-abhasa or that which appears to be bhakti but in fact is not, and in the third chapter we discussed the natural attributes of suddha-bhakti. In this chapter we will discuss the adhikara or qualification for suddha-bhakti. No one acquires anything without possessing the eligibility for it. This eligibility or qualification is the very foundation of success. When a devotee fully understands this, he will no longer remain doubtful concerning his eventual achievement of the ultimate goal. Many devotees think, “For a long time now I have been fully surrendered to my guru, I have accepted the diksa-mantra from him, I am also engaged in sravana and kirtana, but still I am not experiencing the desired result—what is the reason for this?” Gradually they become disinterested in their bhajana and in the end they become totally faithless. Sound knowledge of the conception of the proper qualification for bhakti can easily protect one from such doubts.

It should be carefully noted that the performance of devotional activities such as sravana and kirtana and the resultant appearance of symptoms like the shedding of tears and trembling should not be accepted as true bhakti for anyone and everyone. Hence, in order to take shelter of suddha-bhakti it is compulsory to analyse the proper qualification for it. The hari-bha- jana performed by karmadhikaris and jnanadhikaris, or those who are eligible to perform karma and cultivate jnana, usually becomes a part of mere karma and jnana. Therefore, such people don’t obtain the auspicious fruit which is expected from the performance of bhajana. A devotee’s hari-bhajana becomes pure only when he obtains the proper adhikara or qualifi-cation for suddha-bhakti, and when this happens, his bhajana will very quickly bear fruit in the form of bhava. For this reason I have undertaken an analysis of this very important topic. Scholars quote the following

verse from Srimad Bhagavad-gita (7.16):

catur-vidha bhajante mam janah sukrtino 'rjuna

arto jijnasur artharthi jnani ca bharatarsabha

"My dear Arjuna! As a result of their accumulation of pious activities in innumerable lifetimes, four types of people engage in My bhajana: arta or those who are distressed, jijnasu or those

who are inquisitive, artharthi or those who desire wealth and jnani or those who possess spir-

itual knowledge. These four kinds of virtuous persons are qualified to perform My bhajana."

Those who are very anxious to eradicate their distress are called arta. Those who are inquisitive to understand the absolute truth are called jijnasu. Those who desire to attain material happiness are called artharthi, and those who are realising spiritual truth at every moment are called jnani. Though one may be arta, jijnasu, artharthi or jnani, unless one has some sukrti or accumulated pious merit he will not be inclined towards bhajana. Srila Jiva Gosvami has defined sukrti as "those activities in connection with transcendental personalities which give rise to an intense desire to perform bhakti. " There may be doubts concerning the existence of sukrti in the artas, jijnasus and artharthis, but in relation to the jnanis there are no such doubts. It is a fact that jnanis certainly engage in bhajana after their abundant accumulation of sukrti. Srila Rupa Gosvami writes (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.20-21):

tatra gitadisuktanam caturnam adhikarinam

madhye yasmin bhagavatah krpa syat tat priyasya va

sa ksina-tat-tad-bhavah syac chuddha-bhakty adhikaravan

yathebhah saunakadis ca dhruvah sa ca catuh-sanah

"When the four types of persons who are eligible to engage in bhakti as mentioned in the Gita and other scriptures receive the mercy of Bhagavan or His devotees, they become free from their particular motivations which are

respectively desire for relief from distress, the desire to have their inquisitiveness satisfied, the desire to obtain wealth and the attachment to jnana. They then become adhikaris or rightful candidates for suddha-bhakti. This is clearly visible from the examples of Gajendra, the rsis headed by Saunaka, Dhruva Maharaja and the four Kumaras."

When Gajendra was seized by the crocodile and was unable to free himself despite innumerable strenuous efforts, he fervently prayed to Bhagavan. Then Bhagavan, the saviour of the distressed, appeared and delivered Gajendra by killing the crocodile. By the mercy of Bhagavan, Gajendra's distress was removed and he became qualified for suddha-bhakti. Saunaka and the other rsis became very fearful upon the arrival of Kali-yuga. Understanding the inability of karma or fruitive activity to yield any benefit, they approached the great devotee Suta Gosvami and inquired how the people of this age could attain the ultimate benefit. In his reply Suta Gosvami instructed them on suddha-bhakti, and as a result of receiving his mercy in this way, they attained suddha-bhakti. Dhruva Maharaja worshipped Bhagavan moti-vated by the desire to attain an opulent kingdom. But when Bhagavan appeared before him, by Bhagavan's mercy his desire for a kingdom vanished and he became qualified for suddha-bhakti. Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanandana, and Sanat-kumara are the four Kumaras. Previously they were nirvisesa-jnanis or impersonalists, but later on, by the mercy of Bhagavan and His devotees, they completely rejected the conception of impersonalism and attained the adhikara for suddha-bhakti.

The purport is that as long as all of them harboured desires within their hearts either for relief from their distress, to satisfy their inquisitiveness or to obtain wealth, or were attached to an impersonal conception of the absolute truth, they were ineligible for suddha-bhakti. Therefore, in relation to the adhikara for suddha-bhakti, Srila Rupa Gosvami has written (Bhakti- rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.14):

yah kenapy ati-bhagyena jata-sraddho 'sya sevane

natisakto na vairagyabhag asyam adhikary asau

"When one is not too attached to or detached from this material world and by some good fortune develops faith in the service of Krsna's lotus feet, he is considered to possess the adhikara for suddha-bhakti."

The purport is that when worldly people realise the futility of material existence after being afflicted by various types of distress and by suffering in the absence of their desired objects, they begin to lead their lives in a mood of detachment from the material world. If by some good fortune at such a time they acquire the association of Bhagavan’s devotees, they enquire from them and come to understand that there is no higher destination than the attainment of Bhagavan. Gradually they develop firm faith in this and engage in bhajana. At that time it can be said that they have developed sraddha in krsna-bhakti. This very sraddha is the root cause of the eligibility for suddha-bhakti, as confirmed by Srila Jiva Gosvami’s explanation (found in Bhakti-sandarbha, Anuccheda 172) of these verses from Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.20.27-28):

jata-sraddho mat-kathasu nirvinnah sarva-karmasu

veda duhkhatmakan kaman parityage ’py anisvarah

tato bhajeta mam pritah sraddhalur drdha-niscayah

jusamanas ca tan kaman duhkhodarkams ca garhayan

Sri Krsna says, “My devotees who have developed faith in hearing the narrations of My pastimes remain detached from fruitive activities and try to accept the objects of the senses just enough to maintain their lives, knowing well that sense enjoyment leads to a miserable result. Still enduring the reactions to their previous karma and endeavouring to become free from the cycle of the pleasant and unpleasant results which arise from such activities, they sincerely regret those fruitive activities and silently condemn them. They simply tolerate the reactions to those activities while simultaneously remaining engaged in My bhajana with firm faith and resolve.”

While explaining the above verses which describe how a faithful devotee performs bhajana, Srila Jiva Gosvami has commented in the Bhakti-sandarbha, “tad-evam-ananya-bhakty- adhikare hetum sraddha-matram uktva sa yatha bhajeta tatha siksayati,” which means that sraddha is the sole cause of the adhikara to perform suddha-bhakti. Srila Jiva Gosvami also mentions, “sraddha hi sastartha-visvasah. sastram ca tad asaranasya bhayam tac charanasyab- hayam vadati. ato jatayah sraddhayas tat saranapattir eva lingam iti,” which means faith in the words of the scriptures is called sraddha. The scriptures mention that those who have taken shelter of the lotus feet of Bhagavan have nothing to fear, but

those who have not done so remain fearful. Thus, it can be understood from the symptoms of saranapatti whether or not sraddha has developed within someone. What is saranapatti? Srila Jiva Gosvami writes “jatayam sraddhayam sada tad anuvrtti-cestaiva syat” and “ karma-parityago vidhiyate,” which means upon the appearance of sraddha, krsnanuvrtti-cesta or the constant endeavour to serve Krsna is always visible in a person’s behaviour and the tendency to perform karma or fruitive activities is altogether removed. This is saranapatti. In Srimad Bhagavad-gita (18.66), after giving separate explanations of karma, jnana and bhakti, through a most confidential statement Bhagavan has given instruction on saranapatti:

sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja aham tvam sarva-papebhyo moksayisyami ma sucah

We should understand the words “ sarva-dharma” in this verse to mean dharmas which are obstacles to saranapatti such as the pursuance of one’s occupational duties within the varnasrama system and the worship of demigods. Sri Krsna is saying, “Rejecting all of these, one should perform saranapatti unto Me, meaning one should develop exclusive sraddha towards engaging in My bhajana. Don’t be fearful of the reactions which come to those who commit the sin of rejecting their occupational duties. I assure you that I will free you from the reactions of all such sins.”

The doubt may arise that the word sraddha, meaning faith, actually refers here to respect. The paths of karma, jnana and so forth also require sraddha. Thus sraddha is not only the cause of bhakti, but of karma and jnana also. The philosophical principal is that the word sraddha actually means feelings of faith in the injunctions of the scriptures, and included within this feeling another sentiment certainly exists which is called ruci or taste. Despite possessing faith, one may not desire to participate in a particular activity unless he has developed ruci for it. Sraddha in the paths of karma and jnana is always mixed with a particle of bhakti in the form of ruci. Only through the influence of this fraction of bhakti are the paths of karma and jnana able to yield any result. Similarly, the sraddha which develops for bhakti is endowed with ruci, and this sraddha is none other than the seed of the bhakti-lata or creeper of devotion which is sown in the heart of the jiva. Sraddha in the paths of karma and jnana is mixed with ruci for the activities of karma and jnana respectively, but the nature of this sraddha is different. Only the sraddha which is endowed with ruci for bhakti culminates in the symptoms of bhakti. This is called saranapatti. Only when one’s ruci for

bhakti advances through the progressive stages of sadhu-sanga, the performance of bhajana, anartha-nivrtti and finally assumes the form of nistha does it become suddha-ruci. Thus sraddha is a separate tattva or entity from bhakti. Srila Jiva Gosvami writes in Bhakti-sandarbha, “tasmac chraddha na bhakty angam kintu karmany asamartha vidvat tavad ananyatakhyayam bhaktav adhikari-visesanam eva.” Hence, sraddha is not a limb of bhakti, but an attribute for the adhikara for suddha-bhakti resulting from one’s having become indifferent to the activities of karma-kanda. It says in Snmad-Bhagavatam (11.20.9):

tavat karmani kurvita na nirvidyeta yavata

mat-katha-sravanadau va sraddha yavan na jayate

Sri Krsna says, “One should continue performing his occupational duties as long as he hasn’t become indifferent to them and hasn’t developed sraddha towards hearing the narrations of My pastimes.”

The purport is that one is qualified to renounce his occupational duties only when he develops sraddha in hearing the narrations of Krsna’s pastimes. This is the conclusion of the scriptures.

To clarify a possible doubt here, we must note that if sraddha, which is the very cause of the qualification for suddha-bhakti, is itself not a limb of bhakti, then how can jnana and vairagya, which in some instances manifest before the appearance of sraddha, be limbs of bhakti Srila Rupa Gosvami says (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.248):

jnana-vairagyor bhakti-pravesayopayogita

isat prathamam eveti nangatvam ucitam tayoh

“In some particular instances jnana and vairagya may be useful while a devotee is in the initial stages of entering into bhakti-tattva, but they can never be said to be limbs of bhakti.”

Hence, it is an established fact that only that sraddha which is endowed with the symptoms of saranapatti is the cause of the qualification for suddha-bhakti. Sometimes people are heard saying that faith in hearing the narrations of Krsna’s pastimes is developed by some through the strict performance of their occupational duties, by some through the cultivation of jnana and by others

through renunciation of the objects of the senses. But such statements are erroneous. It is possible that these processes may have been cultivated just prior to the appearance of sraddha, but through a more detailed analysis it becomes apparent that somehow or another there must have been some sat-sanga or association with devotees just between the two instances; that is, between the cultivation of the above-mentioned processes and the appearance of sraddha. In this context the following verse from Siimad-Bhagavatam (10.51.53) is worthy of consideration:

bhavapavargo bhramato yada bhavej

janasya tarhy acyuta sat-samagamah

sat-sangamo yarhi tadaiva sad-gatau

paravarese tvayi jayate matih

“O my dear infallible Lord! Becoming opposed to You, the living entity sometimes attains worldly sense pleasure by pursuing the path of karma and sometimes attains liberation

through the cultivation of jnana. Thus he is entangled in the repeated cycle of birth and death. If while wandering in this way the jiva somehow becomes fortunate and receives the association of Your devotees, with great determination he fixes his intelligence at Your lotus feet, understanding You to be the only shelter of saintly persons, the origin of all creation, both material and spiritual, and the ultimate goal.”

Thus karma, jnana, vairagya and so on can never be the cause of the appearance of sraddha; only sat-sanga can cause the appearance of sraddha. In this regard Srila Rupa Gosvami has composed lines such as, “yah kenapy ati-bhagyena jata-sraddho ’sya sevane.” Thus only per-sons endowed with sraddha are the adhikaris or rightful candidates for suddha-bhakti. There is another consideration here. Sadhana-bhakti is of two types, vaidhi-sadhana-bhakti and raganuga-sadhana-bhakti, as confirmed in this verse from Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (1.2.5): vaidhi raganuga ceti sa dvidha sadhanabhidha. It is essential to understand the difference between vaidhi-sadhana-bhakti and raganuga-sadhana-bhakti because without this understanding there may remain many suspicions which can harm the development of one’s bhakti. Concerning vaidhi-bhakti, Srila Rupa Gosvami has written:

yatra raganavaptatvat pravrttir upajayate

sasanenaiva sastrasya sa vaidhi bhaktir ucyate

Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.6

Bhakti is the jiva’s natural inclination and the inseparable occupation of his intrinsic nature. In the conditioned stage, the jiva is opposed to Bhagavan and becomes attached to the worldly enjoyment presented by the illusory energy. As the jiva becomes immersed in worldly pleasure, his natural inclination to render loving devotional service unto Krsna becomes dormant. The jiva is fully satisfied only when by some good fortune his intrinsic raga or strong loving attachment for Krsna reawakens, however it may happen. When prema appears, raga naturally appears alongside it. But the raga or attachment for material sense objects which is visible in the conditioned soul is distorted raga, not suddha-raga. In that stage the inborn raga of the jiva remains covered or dormant. To awaken this inherent raga, the acceptance of spiritual instruction is essential. The Vedas and their subordinate literatures are storehouses of such instructions. The bhakti which is performed within the framework of the instructions of the scriptures is called vaidhi-bhakti.

Now I will give a brief review of raganuga-bhakti. Srila Jiva Gosvami writes in Bhakti-san- darbha, “tatra visa-yinah svabhaviki visaya-samsargecchatisaya-mayah prema ragah. yatha caksur adinam saundaryadau, tadrsa evatra bhaktasya sri-bhagavaty api raga ity ucyate.” The powerful loving affection which naturally develops within a materialistic person by his affiliation with the objects of sense pleasure is called raga. Just as eyes become excited upon seeing any beautiful form, the similar inclination of a devotee towards Krsna is also called raga. The taste which develops from following in the footsteps of a personality who possesses natural ruci or taste for such raga is called raganuga-bhakti. Regarding the qualification for raganuga- bhakti, Srila Rupa Gosvami writes:

ragatmikaika-nistha ye vraja-vasi-janadayah

tesam bhavaptaye lubdho bhaved atradhikaravan

tat-tat-bhavadi-madhurye srute dhiryad apeksate

natra sastram na yuktim ca tal lobhotpatti-laksanam

Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.291-292

“The vraja-vasis’ sentiments for Krsna are the most exalted and exceptional example of ragat- mika-bhakti. Such sentiments cannot be seen anywhere other than Vraja. The fortunate soul who develops the greed to attain sentiments for Krsna such as those displayed by the vraja- vasis is the adhikari or rightful candidate for raganuga-bhakti. Despite having heard about the sweetness of such sentiments, one cannot enter into them until he becomes ‘greedy’ for them. The sole cause of the qualification for the practice of raganuga-bhakti is this spiritual greed, not careful study of the scriptures and the skilful use of logic.”

Thus we understand that just as sraddha is the only cause of the adhikara for vaidhi-bhakti, similarly greed is the only cause of the adhikara for raganuga-bhakti. Here a doubt may arise concerning whether the sraddha which has been previously established as the cause for the eligibility for suddha-bhakti is incomplete. If that sraddha is the cause of the eligibility only for one type of bhakti, then why has it been said to be the cause of the eligibility for all types of bhakti To dispel such a doubt, it is again stressed that sraddha is the only cause of the adhikara for suddha-bhakti. In the absence of sraddha, no variety of suddha-bhakti can ever appear. The conclusion is that sastra-visvasamayi-sraddha or sraddha derived from faith in the injunctions of the scriptures is the only cause of the adhikara for vaidhi-bhakti and bhava-madhurya- lobhamayi-sraddha or sraddha derived from intense greed to experience the sweet sentiments of the vraja-vasis is the only cause of the adhikara for raganuga-bhakti.

Only sraddha—whether it be visvasamayi or lobhamayi-—is the cause of the eligibility for both types of suddha-bhakti.

There are three types of adhikaris or rightful candidates for vaidhi-bhakti: uttama, madhyama and kanistha, as confirmed by Srila Rupa Gosvami in Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (1.2.16), “uttamo madhyamas ca syat kanistha-sceti sa tiidha.”

The symptoms of an uttama-adhikari in vaidhi-bhakti are:

sastre yuktau ca nipunah sarvatha drdha-niscayah

praudha sraddho ’dhikari yah sa bhaktav uttamo matah

Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.17

"One who is conversant with the scriptures, expert in all types of logic and possesses unwavering determination is the uttama-adhikari or one endowed with firm sraddha."

The symptoms of the madhyama-adhikari in vaidhi-bhakti are:

yah sastradisv anipunah sraddhavan sa tu madhyamah

Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.19

"One who is not so expert in understanding the scriptures and yet is faithful is a madhyama- adhikari; in other words, although when presented with difficult arguments he is unable to answer them, within his mind he remains firmly faithful to his own principle."

The symptoms of the kanistha-adhikari are:

yo bhavet komala-sraddhah sa kanistho nigadyate

Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.19

Kanistha devotees have very little expertise in understanding the scriptures and their sraddha is very delicate and immature. Their sraddha can be changed by others' logic and arguments.

It is to be noted here that the sraddha which is visible in these three types of faithful persons is characterised by faith in the injunctions of the scriptures and by being mixed with logical evidences which are dependent on the scriptures. According to the degree of greed possessed by the rightful candidates for raganuga-bhakti, they can also be divided into the three categories of uttama, madhyama and kanistha.

The conclusion is that every human being has the right to perform bhakti. Brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas, sudras and antyajas (untouchables), grhastas, brahmacaris, vanaprasthas and sannyasis—all of them can be qualified for bhakti if they have sraddha in the injunctions of the scriptures and the instructions of the sadhu and guru. Either an educated person through the study of the scriptures or an uneducated person through hearing the principles of the scriptures in the association of devotees is said to have developed sraddha when he realises the supremacy of bhakti as described in the scriptures. Alternatively, if one develops

lobhamayi- sraddha by continually hearing the narrations of Bhagavan's pastimes in the association of devotees while desiring to follow in the footsteps of the ragatmika devotees of Vraja, then it can be said that he has acquired the adhikara to perform suddha-bhakti. The adhikara for sud- dha-bhakti cannot be achieved by the processes of j—ana, vairagya, philosophical analysis, religious discussion, self-control or meditation. Despite receiving sampradayika-diksa or initiation into a bona fide disciplic succession one cannot enter into the previously discussed uttama- bhakti until he becomes an uttama-adhikari. Until that time one's bhakti can be said to be bhakti-abhasa.

There is great necessity to strive for the stage of uttama-adhikari. This is possible only when one engages in sravana and kirtana in the association of devotees. We should never think that one becomes an uttama-adhikari simply by diligently practicing sravana and kirtana and then displaying the symptoms of shedding tears, trembling and dancing, because these symptoms can also manifest in bhakti-abhasa. Whatever little softening of the heart and determination to realise one's inherent identity which are visible in the beginning stages of suddha-bhakti are far superior to the display of symptoms such as falling unconscious and so on which arise as a result of pursuing the path of bhakti-abhasa. Therefore, we should strive to attain suddha- bhakti with the utmost care. We should make a special effort to pursue the proper method to attain the qualification for bhakti; otherwise there is no possibility of attaining the eternal association of Bhagavan. Visva-vaisnava dasa puts forward the following verses:

sraddha lobhatmaka ya sa visvasa-rupini yada

jayate 'tra tada bhaktau nrmatrasyadhikarita (1)

na sankhyam na ca vairagyam na dharmo na bahujnata

kevalam sadhu-sango 'yam hetuh sraddhodaye dhruvam (2)

sravanadi-vidhanena sadhu-sanga-balena ca

anarthapagame sighram sraddha nisthatmika bhavet (3)

nisthapi rucitam prapta suddha-bhaktyadhikaritam

dadati sadhake nityam esa pratha sanatano (4)

asat-sango ’thava bhaktav aparadhe krte sati

sraddhapi vilayam yati katham syac chuddha-bhaktata (5)

atah sraddhavata karyam savadhanam phalaptaye

anyatha na bhaved bhaktih sraddha prema-phalatmika (6)

When sraddha which is based either on faith in the injunctions of the scriptures or on greed to follow in the footsteps of a ragatmika-bhakta appears in the heart, a person attains the adhikara for suddha-bhakti. Sankhya, vairagya, varnasrama-dharma or becoming a scholar do not cause the appearance of sraddha. The sole cause of the appearance of sraddha is the association of a sadhu who has deep love for the narrations of Krsna’s pastimes. When sraddha appears, one becomes a kanistha-adhikari. When one executes the limbs of sadhana-bhakti such as sravana, and when by the influence of sadhu-sanga one becomes free from anarthas and his sraddha becomes dense and transforms into nistha, one develops the madhyama- adhikara or intermediate qualification for suddha-bhakti. By the further pursuance of the activ-ities of sadhana-bhakti such as sravana and by the influence of associating with devotees who are more advanced than oneself, one’s nistha intensifies and assumes the form of ruci. The sad- haka within whom such ruci has developed is called an uttama-adhikari. Only such an uttama- adhikari attains suddha-bhakti. This is the eternal process for the attainment of suddha-bhakti. But if during the execution of this gradual process of sadhana one keeps the bad association of those who are attached to sense pleasure or those attached to an impersonal conception of the absolute truth, or if one disrespects a pure devotee or commits any other offence to him, sraddha at the kanistha level as well as that at the madhyama level will dry up from its very root and the sadhaka will be unable to achieve suddha-bhakti. In such a condition the sadha- ka is either entangled in chaya-bhakti-abhasa or, in the case of committing numerous offences, even glides down into pratibimba-bhakti-abhasa. Therefore, until one attains the stage of utta- ma-adhikara, the faithful and sincere sadhaka should remain extremely careful. Otherwise it will be very difficult to achieve suddha-bhakti which ultimately bears the fruit of prema.

Sri-krsnarpanam astu—may this treatise be an offering unto Sri Krsna.